

**Scrutiny Panel**

30 July 2019

**Response to Community Call-In of:****1. Community Engagement Framework - Community and Engagement Committee - 12 July 2019**

**Text of Community Call-In at numbered paragraphs below.  
Text of response can be found at paragraph indentations.**

1. WE, the undersigned, being those who live, work or study in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, hereby call in all decisions of item 6 of the Community and Engagement Committee held on 12th June 2019, 'Community Engagement Framework' for the following reasons:
  - a. **No officer comment**
  
2. Members of the public were not able to contribute to this item, as the co-chairs refused to allow those who 'hadn't submitted a green slip' to speak, despite allowing them to on other items, bringing into question whether the decision-making was sound - particularly given this item was all about community engagement(!);
  - a. **Members of the public did contribute to this item ([https://kingston.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/418535](https://kingston.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/418535) approximately 00:50:00-01:03:45 of the broadcast).**
  - b. **The use of green slips is favoured by committees to allow for agenda modification, the preparation of responses, and to avoid duplication of questions.**
  - c. **After a member of the public called from the public gallery asking to speak on this item, the Chair declined to return to the public questions section of the item and advised the petitioner that he could 'fill in a green slip [to be able to] ask a question on the next item [on the agenda]' (01:06:50).**
  - d. **Ultimately, the Chair of a committee has discretion over public contributions at meetings. The Chair did not act improperly in this instance.**
  
3. The committee wanted to engage with people 'who don't normally engage with the council', so the notion that this will be achieved through a consultation portal which doesn't meet government guidelines on domains as well as neighbourhoods is laughable and inadequate - consultation must be wider;
  - a. **This framework does not require a formal statutory consultation process. As well as asking for views through the portal and the neighbourhood committees, the framework was being sent to partners, including voluntary and community groups (which includes disability**

- groups), for engagement. These plans had started but have been paused as a result of this Community Call-In.
- b. **Local authorities use a range of domain names on portals to facilitate consultation and engagement. These are often accessed through local authority GOV.uk sites and are clearly branded as being part of the appropriate local authority. This is the case with the *Kingston's Let's Talk* site.**
4. There is no basis for the consultation - no drafted questions, no concrete timescales, which did not allow for any evidence-based decision making as the councillors had no idea what form the engagement would take;
- a. **The timescales were clear with the framework to be published online by the end of September. The draft questions do not need to come to committee as this is not a formal statutory consultation.**
5. Paragraph 22 of the report states the 'framework will comply with equalities best practice' - not law? This is wholly inadequate, as equalities legislation exists for a reason;
- a. **'Best practice' includes the law as regards equalities legislation.**
6. No risk assessment has been completed, despite officers' promise to send this to residents post-committee. It has now been admitted no risk assessment has been completed, which is a major flaw;
- a. **The initial risk assessment of the outline framework stands as in the report - The risk of not doing this would limit our ability to engage as widely as possible and 'hardwire' engagement in all we do.**
- b. **This is the overriding risk in that the framework provides guiding principles and a consistency of approach to guide how the council engages with communities.**
- c. **When individual business cases are required for activities outlined in the framework, these would include individual risk assessments.**
7. No equalities analysis has been undertaken on the impact of an 'online' consultation and neighbourhood committee meeting. We have many disabled residents in this borough who may have restricted mobility and no access to the internet. Before this is consulted upon, a thorough analysis must be undertaken in order to ensure that the consultation is accessible to all; and
- a. **In line with the statement above about best practice and equalities legislation we would ensure - as we always do - that the consultation is accessible. This is not a statutory consultation.**

8. The framework is in no way resident-friendly, and a first-class attempt at corporate jargon. Residents deserve better than this in understanding how the council will engage with them.

- a. **This is opinion and these comments along with suggestions for improvement can be included in the consultation that is currently paused, dependent on the outcome of the Community Call-In.**

### **Authors of Officer Response**

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