Are Ward Committees Fit for Purpose?

A report from Overview & Scrutiny

Preface

By Cllr Waseem Zaffar MBE, Chair Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee

The findings of the Kerslake Review on Ward Committees make interesting reading and largely correlate with our findings. We welcome his comments around the need for "more powerful community engagement" and that Ward Committees should be an important mechanism for citizen engagement as that is what the Leader's Policy Statement and the City Council's constitution state. Kerslake comments:

> "There is a lack of space in formal district and ward meetings for more general conversations so the council is not able to hear what people want and to be able to react."

His recommendation is that:

> "Formal ward committees should be changed to allow them to operate more like residents' community forums, providing a space for residents to spontaneously raise issues and have general discussions. [1]"

We would be comfortable with this as a way forward as it is exactly what many of those giving evidence to us have also been stating. Ward Committees are not the only means of engagement; Councillors adopt a range of ways to engage, but they should be an integral part of local engagement.

Volunteers in the community who are members of residents' groups need to be recognised for their role in giving local citizens a voice. We suggest that Ward Committee agendas need to have feedback from community groups and that there is a more formal linkage with District Committees.

It is important that citizens understand the purpose of the meetings and their rights within these. Whilst we acknowledge that many wards are engaging well, we thought it important to set out some minimum entitlements. We would also encourage Ward Committees to innovate and to share that innovation and good practice with the District Committee.

Birmingham is a hugely diverse city with many complex issues. A one size fits all solution is not appropriate and by no means is what is being suggested in this report.

Citizens and Councillors should have the right to determine what will work best in their area. Giving partners access to citizens via Ward Committees and promoting partnership arrangements should be a key

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[1] Kerslake Review see www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-into-corporate-governance-at-birmingham-city-council

aspect of Ward Committees and needs to be developed further. The City Council has been radical in its online engagement. We need to now go that extra mile and explore web-streaming of Ward Committees too, learning from the West Midlands Police who have been piloting live streaming and receiving questions on twitter at Neighbourhood Tasking Groups in south Birmingham. Technology should also be used to find a better way to update citizens and partners with real time updates of local priorities and actions.

However, offline engagement in Birmingham is paramount and will never be entirely replaced by online engagement. Thus, the responsibility to inform and educate citizens about the structures of the council and to promote Ward Committees better needs to lie in the hands of Councillors.

This report is only as good as the evidence it receives and I would like to thank those who provided evidence both at the Committee meeting and by twitter, the web chat and those who attended the Citizens UK and Chamberlain Forum events. Also, a record number of surveys were completed with 200 responses received and my thanks goes to the people who took the time to complete this. In addition I would like to thank all the Committee Members for their constructive dialogue and Amanda Simcox and Benita Wishart from the Scrutiny Office.

Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	That all Ward Committees, or any successor arrangement for governance at this level, adopt the Citizen Entitlements set out in section 3.2.	Leader	December 2015
R02	That each Ward Committee, or any successor arrangement for governance at this level, considers the good practice set out in paragraphs 3.2.4 – 3.2.13 and reports back to the appropriate District Committee on innovations they will use and; that Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee will consider any resulting innovative practice.	Leader in conjunction with Executive Members for Local Services and Ward Committee Chairs	December 2015
R03	That technology is harnessed to better support Ward Committees, or any successor arrangement for governance at this level: a) Any upgrading to the City Council's website enable the Wards and Ward Committee information to be easier to locate; b) That ward information on the website is more comprehensive and up-to-date (following the example of the Neighbourhood Tasking Group pages); c) That the Birmingham Newsroom tweet dates and links to ward committees; d) To develop an "app"[2] (a web application) which enables information relating to the ward to be easily accessible and meeting agendas and reports and action notes to be accessible.	Deputy Leader	December 2015
R04	The Council's structures and resources should be used better to support Ward Committees, or any successor arrangement for governance at this level: a) Provide appropriate support to ensure that the meetings are set up and supported appropriately; b) Provide appropriate support to ensure that agendas and actions happens	Leader	June 2015

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[2] a self-contained program or piece of software designed to fulfil a particular purpose; an application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device

	following the meetings; c) Council Officers need to attend when requested (or to actively explain to the Ward Committee Chair why they cannot) but equally if they are expected to be held accountable over a topic this needs to be explained by the Chair; d) Publications such as the Council's Forward publication should promote the concept of Ward Committees. We request regular updates on Ward and District Champions: reviewing the role, who is in place and how well it is working.		
R05	That the City Council's adult education service explores the potential for developing a course on active citizenship and democratic structures in the city.	Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture in conjunction with the Executive Members for Local Services	July 2015
R06	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an interim report in July 2015 with a final implementation report being presented in December 2015.	Leader	Interim progress report July 2015 Final implementation report December 2015

1 Introduction

1.1

1.3 The Remit of the Inquiry

1.3.1 It was not the remit of this Inquiry to dictate to Ward Committees on how they should run their meetings – Ward Committees are best placed to do this. The remit was to make recommendations and suggestions on improvements that can be made to make Ward Committees stronger in line with the Leader's Policy Statement (2012) and the City Council's constitution.

1.3.2 In undertaking this Inquiry the Committee explored the following themes:

Is there clarity on the purpose of Ward Committees?

Do they enable effective engagement, influence and contribution by citizens?

How effective are the process and outcomes?

How effective is the support available?

What is their overall effectiveness?

What should good Ward Committees look like?

Are there alternative models that could be developed to meet the aims?

1.3.3 The Inquiry was undertaken by holding an evidence gathering session on the 2nd September 2014. This is available to view at www.birmingham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/145328 . The witnesses who attended are set out in Appendix 1.

1.3.4 Evidence gathering for this Inquiry also included:

A questionnaire/survey;

A Chamberlain Forum's Community Conversation on Ward Committees event on 22nd August 2014 (full report available at www.fixingtheseal.wordpress.com);

A Citizens UK round table event on the 29th August 2014 attended by the Chair of this O&S Committee;

A Web chat on the 1st September 2014;

The use of twitter and the #wardcttees hashtag;

Councillors of this O&S Committee attended other Ward Committees.

1.3.5 In addition the Social Cohesion and Community Safety O&S Committee undertook a Neighbourhood Tasking Inquiry in May 2014. This Inquiry incorporates the findings and outcomes from this:

Location and timings of meetings need to both facilitate attendance by the public and partners and to avoid potential duplication wherever possible;

Need for a more consistent relationship between Neighbourhood Tasking and Ward Committees;

A communications strategy with sign up from partner agencies to encompass:

| The development of a common understanding about Neighbourhood Tasking to include clarity about language used;

| Feedback to be given to members of the public or Councillors who have raised issues through the Chair or lead contact within the relevant agency;

| Local Delivery Groups (LDGs) taking responsiblity for reporting on Neighbourhood Tasking to District Committees;

| A link to the Police and Crime Board;

| Sharing good practice and ideas;

| A look at different ways of engaging with communities to make them aware of their local Neighbourhood Tasking Group (NTG – police-led engagement);

Tasking groups to identify priorities and provide feedback to local communities on actions taken;

Local businesses and others that are affected by issues in their locality are invited to the appropriate tasking meetings;

provided that in exercising this delegation, the Ward Committee shall comply with all relevant procedures and requirements of the City Council."

1.4.2   Article 13 of the Constitution states that Cabinet has delegated decisions on grants to Neighbourhood Forums and Community Chest to Ward Committees.

1.4.3   This is interpreted differently in different wards. Ward Committee meetings tend to be held every two months and address immediate liveability issues (such as parking, highways, refuse, anti-social behaviour and crime, local facilities and new developments). Importantly, citizens do not have an automatic right to speak or vote. Article 3 of the City Council's Constitution states:

> "Citizens may be granted the right, if invited to do so by the Chairman of the relevant Committee, to participate and   contribute to the discussion, except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is held in private."

1.4.4   In practice this means that citizens are usually asked for their views and are able to ask questions at Committees. Some Chairs appear to ensure that all citizens have a chance to speak, whereas others are mindful of the need to finish a meetin g within a reasonable time frame which can curtail discussion. We received mixed opinions on the length of Ward Committee meetings. Some thought it was most important to allow all citizens to have their say. Others thought that long meetings can be off putting to citizens.

Ward Committee Meetings

1.4.5   The three Councillors for the Ward are appointed on the Ward Committee with the Committee agreeing the Chair for the municipal year. The Ward Committee also agrees on the dates, times and venues for its meetings. Many wards choose to rotate the venues across the ward area.

1.4.6   Research was undertaken as part of evidence gathering for the Citizen Engagement Inquiry[6]. Over a 16 month period (May 2012 – September 2013) the number of Ward Committee meetings ranged from five – eight per ward. The total number of public attendance for these ranged from 30 (Tyburn) to 311 (Longbridge) for that period.

Cost of Ward Committee Meetings

1.4.7   Costs provided by Committee Services for one Ward Committee meeting of an average length of two hours is approximately £345.00 per meeting. Prin ting costs are averaged over the city at £250 per ward (this includes printing of pre-agenda papers and other additional requested reports). The £345 cost only includes attendance of a Committee Services Clerk at the meeting and not the

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[6] Presented to City Council 4 February 2014

additional time they spend in preparation pre and post meeting. It also does not include other officers' time. Therefore, for one Ward Committee meeting in each of the 40 Wards the cost is approximately £13,800. The breakdown for the cost of a Ward Committee meeting is set out below:

Table 1: Approximate Ward Committee Meeting Costs (not including pre & post meeting Committee Services costs)

Description	£
Room Hire	£50.00
Printing Costs	£250.00
Committee Services Clerk	£45.00
Total	£345.00

1.4.8   On 21st October 2014 a report was discussed at Council Business Management Committee about modernising the Democratic Services function and finding further expenditure savings from the General Fund. No final decisions have been made on servicing Ward Committees at the time of writing.

Ward Structure and Framework

1.4.9   It is worth noting that Ward Committees are part of a wider structure and not the only way the Council engages with the community. A broad example of other groups / meetings in the ward is set out in diagram 1, although not all exist in every ward.

1.4.10   The Transforming Place: Working Together for Better Neighbourhoods Framework[8] also provides a context in which Ward Committees exist. This Framework sets out 41 neighbourhood action commitments. These action commitments include enabling communities to take ownership of their place through community led neighbourhood actions zones.

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[8] Agreed by Cabinet on 17th March 2014 (previously known as the Neighbourhood Strategy)

Diagram 1: A Broad Example of Ward   Committees and other Local Groups

1.4.11 The City Council also has a virtual consultation hub called 'Be Heard' www.birminghambeheard.org.uk. We heard at our meeting on the 20th October 2014 that:

> "The use of Be-heard both by officers to post consultations and by the public using the site continues to grow at a rapi   d rate. Year to date there are 50 more at this point in the year and approach   ing 250 are forecast by the year end. Responses are also growing at a similar rate with 74% more responses year to date and approaching 15,999 predic   ted by the end of the year".

1.4.12 On a quarterly basis District Committees' receive a Performance report on their District from the Place Directorate. This includes measures on local engagement The quarter one (2014-15) city

Table 2: Key Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2014-15 [9]

Indicator	City-wide achievement	Target
Percentage satisfied with the opportunities for participation in		

act for issues of concern raised by all local residents, not just the ones that shout loudest." Fewer than one in ten thought they were about decision making or holding either Councillors or officers to account. The Shard End Ward Committee Chair described the purpose simply as "to get action for residents."

2.2.3   The Chamberlain Forum held a roundtable meeting with active citizens and officers and produced a report following that. It states that Ward Committees have two purposes:

> "To enable productive dialogue between civic and civil society and to process (a small and decreasing) set of decisions   about local funding. Their membership

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Items should relate to two or more Wards or be of strategic significance." However, Hall Green District Committee agendas do not reciprocate.

2.2.10 The Council is poor at explaining its structures. A criticism from the Chamberlain Forum needs to be addressed as they point out that there is no le aflet or web page that ex plains how a citizen can be involved.[11] During the course of this inquiry it appears some improvements may have been made if one can find the right page on the we bsite (i.e. there is no link through from the Democracy page). In testing this out we found that if a citizen wants to have a say, but has never heard of "Ward Committees" it is extremely difficult to find out information on the City Council's website.

2.2.11 Given the different views held about the purpose of a Ward Committee we suggest that each Committee agree its focus, in line with the Constitu tion's expectations. In addition, it would be good practice to draw up a framework of the main priorities for improving the local quality of life in the Ward for the year about what Councillors and ci tizens agree they want to try to achieve. This would help citizens have a clear picture of how to make wards a better place to live.

2.2.12 As noted above the formal part of the Ward Committee agenda is the agreement of Community Chest funds. One witness suggested that organisations that receive this should attend a Ward Committee meeting to explain how the money was spent and the outcomes.

2.2.13 To conclude, we feel that engagement and securing outcomes are the whole point of Ward Committees. In our view the precise structure is secondary to the act of creating a dialogue between citizens, Councillors and other local partners, and ensuring practical local actions are taken as a result of the issues raised. Whilst wards may wish to stick to the format as is, it would

mouth and email is the most common way citizens find out, but a fifth said they did not know about Ward Committees.

2.3.3   We are aware that improvements are being made to the Council's website. However, currently the web presence of Ward Committees is not good enough with some information being out of date, hard to find or absent.

2.3.4   It can take five or six clicks through a labyrinth to find out about a meeting on the Council's website. The Democracy in Birmingham webpages are difficult to use unless you are used to it. You can alternatively access a web link to the democracy web page from the Council's Birmingham Newsroom website (www.birminghamnewsroom.com), however citizens may not be aware of this.

2.3.5   The meetings for that week are listed and can be accessed from the democracy web page www.birmingham.gov.uk/demo cracy/Pages/Index.aspx, but there is no ca lendar for the year available. Some respondents said they did not know when meetings were happening, or by the time they find out they are already committed.

2.3.6   One of the weaknesses with reliance on the Democracy in Birmingham web pages is that there is inconsistent practice, but generally future dates of Ward Committees are not put on (this could be because they have not been agreed). This could mean that only if a citizen checks regularly would they find out about the next date, once papers ar e published five working days before a meeting. In addition, we were told that the Democracy in Birmingham webpage is not always updated if a meeting is cancelled or a venue is changed.

2.3.7   **Each Ward therefore needs their web page easily accessible on the Council's website updated with the purpose of the Committee, meeting dates and times and venues and the latest action plan.**

2.3.8   We were told that the current "absence of any funding to advertise a ward meeting means that only those who are in the "loop" are aware of the meetings". Traditional approaches could be used such as the Council's Forward publication, or the Birmingham Mail or fliers, but some respondents felt that Councillors themselves

young people and new communities. We would request that the City Council's adult education

"At the end of each ward committee meeting it is resolved that the Chair is

2.4.4 A number of respondents to the Survey thought that Ward Committees were generally not wholly representative of the community, with few young people attending for example. Also the Chamberlain Forum stated:

> "We did not think that attendance at ward committees generally reflects the diversity of residents: young people in particular and sometimes women and minority groups are more than averagely excluded. In some places, we agreed, active neighbourhood forums play a useful part in both: increasing the extent and diversity of resident attendance at ward committees; and extending their 'reach' to include people who don't go to committee meetings, but do attend, or otherwise keep in touch with, their neighbourhood forum. In other places, forums themselves are poorly attended and networked and need better support."

2.4.5 West Midlands Police also suggested that broadening attendance and making the meetings more representative of the ward has to be a priority. Their piloting of live streaming neighbourhood tasking meetings in Selly Oak and facilitating an online discussion with citizens demonstrates one wayay [(6e [(on01 Tc -.0i)ure)1.7(d)[(on01rae)s.1.459 T3.0263 Tc 972774 Tw [(r)Tj /TT11 1 Tf 6.2459 0 T

a couple of Ward Committees use a "soapbox approach" or an open forum where a wide variety of issues are raised.[14] Alternatively, some have matters of urgent business. One witness suggested that the Any Other Business (AOB) item on the agenda is one of the most important items and that anyone should be able to raise an issue.

2.4.12   Some Ward Committees do have items for future agendas which invite citizens to suggest items

rooms etc. Clearly, the decisions made about support for Ward Committees may make a great difference to how Ward Committees currently function. The Kerslake Review has placed a fundamental emphasis on the need for the City Council to 'get the basics right' in terms of developing a stronger relationship between citizens and their Councillors at a local level. The implications of this recommendation will need to in fluence decisions on the prioritisation of the resources to allow this shift in focus to be achieved.

Ensuring Action and Building Relationships

2.4.28   Previously each Ward had a Ward Support Officer for whom a key aim would be to administer the Community Chest. But in doing this and supporting local Councillors many also played a big role in maintaining contact with local groups and institutio ns. Both they, Democratic Services Officers and Councillors themselves play a role in ensuring that actions occur after meetings. As that support diminishes each Ward needs to develop a strategy about wh fluence decisio18(that s)1.5(s eaton opos02 0

2.4.38   The Committee had mixed views on how successful this would be with engaging local citizens and some Councillors felt there needed to be a protocol or safeguards to ensure that issues raised via the internet were from the citizens within the Ward.

2.4.39   It was also suggested, although not accepted by the whole O&S Committee, that one alternative approach to Ward Committees was having virtual meetings.

2.4.40   Section 2.3 sets out some of the barriers in relation to lack of information and some steps that need to be taken in relation to the City Council's website (birmingham.gov.uk). In addition, there is some good use of social media (facebook / twitter/ hyperlocal blogs) to advertise Ward Committees, get citizens' feedback and to hold the council and partners to account for action. Each Ward needs to agree how to improve its internet presence.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Overall Effectiveness

3.1.1 The aim of this Inquiry was not to conclude as to whether or not Ward Committees should continue, but rather how to improve their effectiveness. From the beginning it was clear that this was a Marmite issue – some people love Ward Committees whilst others appear to hate them. What became very clear, too, during the Inquiry is that across the city many citizens are just unaware of their existence.

3.1.2 There are many examples of good practice and Ward Committees making a difference. We also heard frustrations that they often do not live up to expectations and that the resources put into them could achieve more if used in a different wa y. As the City Council's resources reduce further Ward Committees will need to change or may have to become optional. What is undeniable is (as the Committee's Citizen Engagement report set out) that the Council needs to ensure robust engagement with citizens occurs and that this influences priorities and how services are provided.

Do Ward Committees Enable Effective Engagement, Influence and Contribution by Citizens?

3.1.3 The West Midlands Police view is that Ward Committees are most effective when there is a specific local issue that enables momentum to be built through partners an d there is clear accountability. Some believe that the purpose of Ward Committees should be to shift the balance of power towards citizens.

3.1.4 Overall it was agreed that the focus of Ward Committees should be genuine public engagement to make a difference locally. For instance reports should be concise and in plain English and jargon and acronyms should not be used by Councillors or officers. In the past, some people felt there has been too much emphasis on process, and not enough emphasis on outcomes.

3.1.5 Previous work on engagement (the support services service review and the Committee's Citizen Engagement report) concluded that engagement for the Council should happen through Ward Committees. The service review concluded that specific topic based theme groups be abolished so citizens could engage with the institution of the council as a whole person, rather than as a resident of a neighbourhood, an older or disabled person and a user of specific services. It is clear that Ward Committees in their cu rrent format do not enable th is aspiration to be met.

Are there Alternatives to Ward Committees?

3.1.6 The survey asked if there were better models to achieve engagement. Many respondents felt Ward Committees were the best way, although some felt that improvements needed to be made to Ward Committees. Of those that thought there were alternatives to Ward Committees the responses were broadly:

Deal direct with Councillors, letters/e-mails to Council's Chief Executive, press or officers and petitions directly to full council;

Use social media, vote online, have 'virtual' meetings;

Community Development Trust;

Use questionnaires;

Need to go more local than Wards;

Have Ward Committee Members participating in working groups made up of residents, community groups, traders etc.;

For District Committees to hold periodic public meetings instead about recent and forthcoming issues, including, for example, budget cuts and broader issues such as health and the police precept.

3.1.7   One respondent felt that:

"Police tasking meetings are better, they're more reliable and action concerns."

3.1.8   A number of people proposed more radical changes to Ward Committees. One witness, for example, suggested that they be chaired by a citizen, not a councillor and that each committee has a board of equal numbers of Councillors and citizens which sets the agenda. Others suggested that Councillors should be allowed instead to set up forums on a more flexible basis. These should be more action focused. On balance, however, our view is that Councillors have democratic legitimacy and should, therefore, remain as chairs.

3.1.9   However, as we have noted, there are many suggestions about improving Ward Committees to make them fit for purpose. It is clear too that, they are only one tool to local engagement and there could be in the future, other ways to achieve this.

Are Ward Committees Fit for Purpose?

3.1.10 To answer this there needs to be greater clarity on what the purpose of Ward Committees are. Overall, the Inquiry confirmed the view that Ward Committees are not fit for purpose if their purpose is as set down in the Constitution and 2012 Leader's Policy Statement. As we were finalising this report the Kerslake Review additionally stated formal ward committees should be changed to allow them to operate more like residents' community forums (see section 1.2).

Table 3: Leader's Policy Statement (LPS) an d Constitution and Committee's Conclusions

3.1.11   If Ward Committees are not meeting their constitutional aims something needs to change – the constitution or the approach of Ward Committees. If the aim is "the major means" of citizen engagement for an area then some transformation is needed.

3.1.12   We feel that there are some structural and procedural issues with Ward Committees as they exist at the moment. Nonetheless it is important to state that we heard about many great examples of engagement at a local level on issues of huge concern to local citizens and with tangible actions

3.2   Recommendations

Citizen Entitlement Standards

3.2.1   This section sets out a number of standards that we consider Ward Committees should adopt so all citizens shall have an entitlement to a democratic civic right to access and engage with the City

d) Broadening Engagement

Ward Committees shall take steps to broaden their reach to make all local citizens welcome whatever their age or personal circumstances.

Timings of meetings and venues are fit for purpose (to include location, access, layout and heating etc.) and locally agreed.

That Councillors can demonstrate they are taking responsibility for promoting why local citizens should attend and how they can have an influence during and surrounding the meetings.

e) Robust Local Linkages

There are strong links with other local community groups (e.g. Neighbourhood Forums and Neighbourhood Tasking Groups etc.) and a process for getting issues of concern discussed there. That the results and action points arising from Ward Committee engagement is fed back to such local community organisations.

Ward Committees shall develop mechanisms for integrating their work alongside other local services, with particular priority to neighbourhood police tasking and local health and care services, and important local voluntary and community based agencies, housing associations and land owners.

f) Access to Information

Information is easily available so citizens can find out about a Ward Committee. Officers and Councillors need to advertise the Ward Committee meetings, giving information relevant to citizens in the invitation, using a range of appropriate methods (such as posters in local public buildings, leaflets through doors and the Council's Forward publication), and emailing in a welcoming way that sets out the topics to be covered and links to the right pages on the Birmingham.gov.uk website.

g) Clear Communication

That citizens can understand the information presented to Ward Committees. Officer reports must be concise and in plain English, and verbal reports delivered with the communication skills necessary for the average citizen to understand what is being said and what it means to them as citizens and local services users.

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Good Practice

3.2.4   **Clarity of Purpose:** at the beginning of each meeting the Chair should clarify the purpose of the meeting and what issues can / cannot be raised.

3.2.5   **Name Change:** we do not feel that the current name

the complex issues of publishing reports in advance or getting it on to the democracy section of the City Council's website.

3.2.12   As citizens do not live their lives in single wards the City Council should also welcome Joint Ward Committees on issues. For example, if there is an issue relating to Soho Road which borders three wards, or Kings Heath which straddles four, Councillors should be able to call a meeting specific for Soho Road or Kings Heath centre, with Councillors and stakeholders from all three wards present. This could be called a "Joint Ward Committee". Erdington has held a number of successful cross border meetings – e.g. on speeding.

3.2.13   **Standing up for Birmingham (#SU4B)**: A three way discussion at Ward Committees (between citizens, officers and Councillors) could enable problems to be solved and new ways of working to be considered. They could also help embed the principles of Standing Up for Birmingham (encouraging and supporting individuals, community groups and voluntary organisations to play a bigger role in delivering services)[21]. By involving Neighbourhood Forums as set out above this would also help develop them in taking some local responsibility themselves for neighbourhood management and contributing to outcomes.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R02	That each Ward Committee, or any successor arrangement for governance at this level, considers the good practice set out in paragraphs 3.2.4 – 3.2.13 and reports back to the appropriate District Committee on innovations they will use and; that Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee will consider any resulting innovative practice.	Leader in conjunction with Executive Members for Local Services and Ward Committee Chairs	December 2015

Technology

3.2.14   As more people access information digitally the City Council needs to make sure that technology enables citizens to better connect with Ward Committees and be able to identify the actions arising from Ward Committees.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R03	That technology is harnessed to better support		

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	We request regular updates on Ward and District Champions: reviewing the role, who is in place and how well it is working.		

3.2.16 As noted in paragraph 2.3.10 many citizens across the city do not understand the structures of the City Council and how they can have a voice.