

Evaluating Local Governance



New Constitutions and Ethics

Questionnaire to Local Authority Officers

Guidance on completion of questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this survey. This questionnaire is intended to collect the views of local authority officers on their council's constitution, adopted in response to the Local Government Act 2000.

The questionnaire should take you less than fifteen minutes to complete in most cases by selecting the option(s) that most closely matches your

On completion of the questionnaire, please return it to us using the stamped addressed envelope provided. We should be grateful if you would complete the survey as soon as possible and no later than Friday 28th October.

If at any stage you have a query about either the questionnaire or the process, please contact our help-line on 0161 275 0799. You can also email us at stephen.greasley@manchester.ac.uk

With many thanks in advance

Questionnaire to Local Authority Officers

You and your council

1 Please give the name of your authority _____ Council

2 For how many years in total have you served as an officer, including service with this and other authorities?

_____ years

3 Please indicate your current roles (tick all that apply)

Chief Executive

Council Manager

Monitoring Officer

Head of Human Resource Management

Other Member of Corporate Management Team

Service Head

Scrutiny Officer

Democratic Services Officer

Other (please specify)

7b If yes, on which of the following have you had training, and by whom?

	Provided internally	Provided in-authority by external trainers	Provided elsewhere
The new council constitution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working to the executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working to the Mayor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working to the new arrangements for scrutiny	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standards arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8 How do you think the new reforms are affecting your career prospects as an officer?

- Will help me get on
- Will make no difference
- Will hold me back

9 In your opinion has the council's new constitution led to the problem of 'two-hattedness' in respect of officers' roles?

- Yes
- No

The work of officers

Officers in alternative arrangement authorities, please answer those questions which are relevant to your authority. Where a question refers to cabinet, please treat as 'policy making committees'.

10 Please indicate which of the following you have performed as part of your officer role (tick all that apply)

- Written an executive report
- Talked to a report at cabinet meeting
- Talked to a report at full council
- Initiated a significant policy review
- Taken a decision alone

11 Approximately how many hours a week do you spend meeting with the Mayor/Leader and other portfolio holders to discuss council business?

_____ hours

12 About how many hours in a typical month do you spend on the following:

- Formal cabinet meetings _____
- Informal cabinet meetings _____
- Preparing for cabinet meetings _____
- Liaising with overview & scrutiny committee _____
- Liaising with partners _____
- Writing reports _____
- Reading reports _____
- Meeting with non executive members _____
- Briefing meetings _____
- Line management function _____
- Overseeing and ensuring delivery _____
- Direct dealings with the public _____
- Other total (please specify below) _____

Other activities

13 What kinds of working environment do you like best?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Where I can develop new ideas and see them turned into policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I mainly write policy position papers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I can take decisions properly delegated to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I work closely in a small circle of decision makers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I work closely with the leader/mayor or portfolio holder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I spend much of my time implementing policy on the ground	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I can concentrate on getting the nuts and bolts right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I can have direct dealing with the public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where I can have regular contact with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Effectiveness of the new arrangements

14 Which of the statements below most closely matches your own view about the working of new arrangements in your authority? (please tick only one)

- The new system is a significant improvement
- The new system is to some extent an improvement
- The new system has made little difference
- The new system has some disadvantages
- Introducing the new system was a retrograde step
- No experience of the past system

15 Do you agree with the following statements about the role of the leader of the council?

	Agree	Neither agree	Disagree	Not applicable
Leader should decide who is in cabinet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leader should allocate portfolios to cabinet members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leader should decide on policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16 Do you agree with the following statements about the role of overview and scrutiny in your authority?

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Chairs of overview and scrutiny should not be from the majority party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Party meetings should be held before overview and scrutiny meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17a Do you agree that the executive (or policy and resources committee in alternative arrangement authorities) in your authority has been effective in:

	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Articulating a vision for the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leading the drive to service performance in your authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leading partnership bodies in your area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting policy direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring the delivery of council policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17b Do you agree that the executive (or policy and resources committee in alternative arrangement authorities) in your authority has been effective in:

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Working with stakeholders in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting good external relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responding to the concerns of non-executives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing relations in the party groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with the budget process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lobbying for resources for the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18a Do you agree that in your authority overview and scrutiny committees have been effective in:

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Holding decision makers to account	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reviewing service outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing clear lines of accountability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring local views are taken into account	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exploring innovative forms of service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18b Do you agree that in your authority overview and scrutiny committees have been effective in:

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Involving external stakeholders in their deliberations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigating non local authority service providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influencing council policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing a forum for community debate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reconciling differences of opinion in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19 How effective is full council at carrying out the duties assigned to it in your authority?

- Effective
- Partially effective
- Ineffective
- Don't know

20 How effective are the arrangements for area based decision-making in your authority?

- Effective
- Partially effective
- Ineffective
- Area committees are consultative only
- No such arrangements
- Don't know

21 How satisfied are you with the way that your local standards committee conducts adjudications?

- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- There have been no local adjudications

22 How effective is the standards committee at promoting an ethical organisation (through, for example, training and guidance, the development of protocols, mediation processes)?

- Effective
- Partially effective
- Ineffective
- Don't know

23 If you want to add any comments about how your local standards committee conducts its business, please use this box:

24 Do you consult the forward plan on a regular basis?

- Yes, always
- Yes, sometimes
- No
- No forward plan in my authority

25 Are you clear what qualifies as a 'key decision' in your authority?

- Yes always
- Sometimes
- No
- No key decisions in my authority

26a Thinking of changes in the last two years, with which of the following statements would you agree characterise the council?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Decision making is quicker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The role of the leader has become stronger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The leader of the council has a higher public profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is easier to find out who has made specific council decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The public is more involved in council decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The council is better at dealing with cross cutting issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The council's relations with partners has improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26b Thinking of changes in the last two years, with which of the following statements would you agree characterise the council?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is easier to find out about council policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Backbench Members are more engaged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Political parties dominate more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is easier for women to become involved in council business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is easier for ethnic minorities to become involved in council business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issues of ethical conduct have a higher profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27 Thinking overall, do you agree that the current political management arrangements in your authority:

	Yes	No
Support visible and effective political leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote democratic legitimacy and public trust in local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide checks and balances to guarantee transparency of decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you for participating in the survey

If you have any further comments about any of the issues raised by the survey, please write them in the box below.

If there are any issues raised by the survey which you would like to discuss with us, please email stephen.greasley@manchester.ac.uk or telephone

