

Democratic Engagement Select Committee Draft Terms of Reference

How can we help residents to take ownership of their democratic processes and access opportunities to shape the city?

Purpose

The Select Committee will review all aspects of public engagement with democracy including interest and participation in future elections, and also local decision making.

Aims and Objectives

1. Enhanced range of opportunities for residents to engage with the City Council's democratic processes
2. Wider public participation across all channels, including corporate consultation exercises
3. Increased voter registration and improved turn out in the 2020 election, particularly amongst underrepresented groups

Provisional Work Programme

The following topics will be covered;

1. Engagement with Democratic Processes
 - To consider whether opportunities for the public to engage with democratic meetings are fit for purpose
 - To explore innovation regarding better use of technology to improve the interface with local residents
 - To improve awareness around access to information
2. Voter Turnout
 - How to increase participation in elections across all groups, but particularly to focus on those where engagement is lowest e.g. young people and some Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
 - To consider whether to make an offer to Government to run an e-voting pilot



3. The City Council's policies towards consultation

- To evaluate the policy regarding the frequency and scale of consultation exercises
- How to maximise participation, public satisfaction and value for money

Supporting Information and Activity

- The Select Committee must align itself closely with the Constitution Working Group, who are reviewing public forum arrangements.
- The independent review of Bristol City Council's 2016 election processes will inform the work of the Select Committee.
- National and local research studies will be used to help the Committee make evidence based recommendations
- Benchmarks from the City Council's Performance Indicators will be used to measure the impact of the Select Committee recommendations.
- The Select Committee will pilot different mechanisms for public engagement using options such as the media, digital engagement tools and reviewing the location and format of meetings.

Membership and Chairing

The Whips will be asked to nominate Members from each group. Membership of 5 is recommended. The chair will be elected at the first meeting.

Timeframe

The Select Committee will commence in February 2016 and run until after the 2020 elections.

Format of meetings

All meetings, unless in exceptional circumstances will be held in public.

Frequency of meetings

Meetings will take place every other month until February 2018, then quarterly thereafter.

Recommendations from the Select Committee

The Select Committee is expected to make several tranches of recommendations over the life of the body. These will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) in the first instance and those that are accepted will be referred to Cabinet and/or Full Council as appropriate.



Officer Support

Support will be provided by the Scrutiny team.

Key Partners and Stakeholders

In order for the Select Committee to achieve its objectives, it will be important to engage with a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

