How to run a citizens' assembly

A handbook for local authorities based on the Innovation in Democracy Programme

Overview

Executive summary

The Innovation in Democracy Programme (IiDP) was funded and run by the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It supported Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to involve residents in decision-making through an innovative model of deliberative democracy - citizens' assemblies. The citizens' assemblies took place between September and December 2019.

As a team of delivery partners – Involve, The Democratic Society, the RSA and mySociety – we have written this handbook based on our experiences delivering the IiDP. It is aimed primarily at local authority officers or councillors who want to run a citizens' assembly in their local area (when we refer to 'you' throughout the report, this is the group we have in mind), but we hope it will be useful to any authority or institution which is considering using a citizens' assembly to actively involve people in tough or complex policy questions.

Starting with the question over whether or not to run a citizens' assembly, the handbook moves chronologically through the different stages involved with planning, organising and delivering a successful process.

It's not a prescriptive 'user guide' - less still a set of mandatory instructions - but we hope you find it useful as a catalogue of ideas and questions to work through that can assist anyone seeking to use deliberative engagement methods in their work.

Below you will find a summary of the key things to think about before, during and after running a citizens' assembly. The complete handbook goes through each of these key learnings in detail to help you define and design the most appropriate and effective citizens' assembly for your area. It also contains examples of good practise from the Innovation in Democracy Programme and other citizens' assemblies to provide learning and inspiration. You can read this handbook in conjunction with the IiDP case studies, co-authored with the participating local authorities, and the IiDP evaluation report, which sets out what worked well and what could have been improved in the design and delivery of the three IiDP assemblies. Do also watch the Innovation in Democracy film to hear the stories of the assemblies from the point of view of participants.

The key things to consider while running a citizens' assembly

Design: before the citizens' assembly

- Whether or not to run a Citizens' assembly
    - Citizens' assemblies are an appropriate method if you want informed judgement by diverse residents to shape your future policy.
    - The viability of running a successful citizens' assembly subsequently depends on:
        - **(i)** the time and resources you have at your disposal - it is not a quick or cheap fix and will require substantial staff time and resource investment;
        - **(ii)** the political context - ideally you want cross-party support for the assembly and senior political champions in the council; and
        - **(iii)** the problem you are trying to solve - the best issues are those which lack easy answers; those which 'keep decision-makers awake at night'.

- Setting the question

    - Choose a question that is neither too broad nor too narrow – the 'Goldilocks option'. Make sure the question is brief, clear, non-binary and has a range of possible trade-offs. Test, and ideally co-draft, the question with residents and politicians.

- Choosing evidence and 'witnesses'

    - In previous UK assemblies, aspects of the selection and review of expert speakers and evidence have been delegated to an independent advisory group. The wider public can also nominate expert speakers or submit evidence for the process, expanding the pool from which the advisory group can draw.

    - Stakeholders and those with lived experience of the issue should be given a platform at any assembly, alongside those with academic or technical expertise.

    - Participants should receive balanced information and enough of it to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic that will enable them to make an informed decision.

- Recruiting for the assembly

    - Most citizens' assemblies are recruited to reflect the wider public in terms of gender, age, location of residence, ethnicity and potentially other criteria.

    - Participants for the IiDP assemblies were recruited through a two-stage civic lottery process: invitation letters were sent to randomly-selected households and from those who responded a random-stratified sample was built to match pre-determined demographic criteria.

Delivery: during the citizens' assembly

A good process will always be tailored to its specific context. Success on the day will depend upon good design and preparation in the run-up to the assembly. This makes it difficult to provide definitive or exhaustive guidance about how to deliver an assembly. Therefore, this section simply signposts some key standards, tools and methods for you to adapt for your own context. Citizens' assembly are composed of a learning stage, a deliberation stage and a final process of decision-making.

- The learning stage

    - You should aim to create a dynamic learning environment: participants should be encouraged to think critically about the information they are hearing and have the opportunity to question or challenge speakers. Experimenting with varied learning formats can also help.

    - Encourage participants to identify if they're missing any information that will help them understand the issue, and support their requests for further speakers or sources of information to plug the gap.

- The deliberation stage

    - Good facilitation will ensure that the deliberations are inclusive, balanced and thorough. It will provide purpose, establish ground rules, set a clear structure and framework for the discussions and make the assembly an enjoyable experience for all participants.

• Argument mapping tools can support deliberation by making it easier for participants' contributions to be understood and analysed. These tools visually arrange claims, evidence and counterarguments, helping participants understand how particular arguments relate to the conversation as a whole.

• The decision-making stage

• For the assembly to reach a conclusion on its recommendations, you can hold a series of votes or ballots on different options, which will give a clear picture of people's preferences and priorities.

• Alternatively, some assemblies avoid a formal voting process by achieving consensus or near-consensus around negotiated recommendations.

• It's important that voting doesn't come at the expense of meaningful collaboration and deliberation. Votes should not be binary and ballot options should be the product of the assembly's deliberations rather than pre-determined options. The group should be given ample time to establish common ground on different themes, ideas and solutions before voting.

• Communicating the assembly

• It is important to have clear messaging about the assembly throughout the process, starting well in advance, so the wider public knows about the process, and understands its purpose and intended impact.

• It is standard practice to release the assembly schedule in advance and to livestream expert presentations, as well as putting all documentation on a website for full transparency and accountability. The discussions of assembly members, however, should be kept private.

• The key is not to justify each individual recommendation made as a result of the process, but to consistently and proactively explain the process throughout and show how and why it works.

Impact: after the citizens' assembly

Once the citizens' assembly itself ends, all work turns towards maximising three kinds of impact:

1. Impact on local administrations' policy

2. Impact on the internal culture and practice of the commissioning institution

3. Impact on the assembly members and the wider community.

• Policy impact

• If you plan, design and deliver a good assembly, there's a greater chance that the final recommendations will be clear and actionable, and carry legitimacy.

• The recommendations should be listed in a report that is written by participants – or at least written in their words – and which outlines the rationale and intent of each proposal.

• Participants should be involved in presenting their recommendations to decision-makers and can be encouraged to monitor the uptake and implementation of recommendations over time.

• You should keep reporting back to residents over time about the council's

timeline for decision-making and action, with key milestones along the way.

- Impact on the council's culture

  - Specialist training can be provided to council staff in the run-up to the assembly and peer-support networks can be set up within and between organisations to facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge. The distinctive skills required for running a citizens' assembly – such as facilitation, process design and deep listening – can be embedded in future council activities, both internally and with the wider public, and the assembly itself can exemplify the value of citizen participation to the council at large.

- Impact on participants and the wider public

  - Citizens' assemblies have consistently been shown to send participants back out into the world with a newfound understanding of a particular issue, an augmented sense of common purpose and a greater drive for civic endeavour.

  - Engaging with non-participants during the process, whenever it is feasible and appropriate, will also help to extend some of these benefits to a wider group. Complementary engagement exercises can be designed to reach more people, including those who responded to the initial mailout but who were not selected.

If you are considering running a citizens' assembly in your area - good luck! It is no small undertaking but the benefits, in terms of better relationships and increased trust with your electorate and better policy making, are invaluable. You will be part of a growing trend of local and national governments around the world using deliberative democracy to empower citizens and solve intractable problems.

Introduction

The Innovation in Democracy Programme (IiDP)

The Innovation in Democracy Programme, commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG), supported three local authorities to involve residents in decision-making through an innovative model of deliberative democracy - citizens' assemblies.

The programme's aims were:

- To increase the capability of local people to have a greater say over decisions that affect their communities and their everyday lives;

- To encourage new relationships and build trust between citizens and local authorities;

- To strengthen local civil society by encouraging participation in local institutions.

Three authorities were selected to take part in the programme: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).[1]

Dudley and Test Valley chose to focus their assemblies on the future of town centres. For Dudley council, it was Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres and in Test Valley, the area south of Romsey town centre. GCP asked assembly members to consider traffic congestion, public transport and air quality.

As a team of delivery partners – Involve, The Democratic Society, the RSA and mySociety – we supported the local authorities to design and deliver their assemblies through a package of tailored support for each authority. This report reflects on our experiences and shares what we have learned.

Starting with the decision about whether or not to run a citizens' assembly, this report moves chronologically through the different stages involved with planning, organising and delivering a successful process. It's not a prescriptive 'user guide' - less still a set of mandatory standards - but we hope it functions as a useful catalogue of ideas and observations that can assist anyone seeking to use deliberative engagement methods in their work.

This report

This report is aimed primarily at local authority officers or councillors who want to run a citizens' assembly in their local area (when we refer to 'you' throughout the report, this is the group we have in mind). But we also hope that it can be of use to others who are interested in deliberative democracy: process designers, facilitators, advocates, researchers or anyone else. While some of the guidance is specific to local citizens' assemblies, lots of the suggestions apply to regional, national and even transnational deliberations.

The insights we share in this report are drawn from three different sources:

- Our reflections on the three IiDP citizens' assemblies and other assemblies that have recently taken place at a local level.

- The ideas that have emerged from the various peer-learning events that we ran as part of IiDP.

- The best guidance written by practitioners around the world.

Lots of the advice in this report is illustrated in the IiDP Case Studies report, which is a trove of real-world examples and personal stories co-authored by council staff that led the three IiDP assemblies.

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[1] The Greater Cambridge Partnership brings together Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the University of Cambridge and representatives of the local business community.

Both reports can also be read alongside the IiDP Evaluation Report, to get another perspective on what worked well and what didn't work so well during the design and delivery of these assemblies. The evaluation report substantiates many of the insights in this toolkit, while also judging how far the IiDP assemblies delivered according to the programme's objectives.

As a triplet of reports, this toolkit, the evaluation report and the case studies provide a varied pool of evidence, guidance and experience from which you can draw. In doing so, we hope you can learn from our experience - both what worked well and what didn't - and run a high-quality process as a result.

Building trust between citizens and local authorities

Since we began working on the Innovation in Democracy Programme at the beginning of 2019, several surveys have signalled declining levels of trust and participation in local politics.

In April 2019, as we were kicking-off the programme in Dudley, Greater Cambridge and Test Valley, the Hansard Society found that 32 percent of British adults don't want to be involved 'at all' in local decision-making - a rise of 10 percentage points in a single year.[2]

In July, after another poor turnout in local government elections, the Community Life Survey found that only 25 percent of people felt able to influence decisions affecting their local area, while 56 percent thought it important to be able to do so.[3] By this stage we were hard at work planning the citizens' assemblies, selecting the expert speakers and starting to recruit participants.

While the assemblies were taking place in the autumn, new data from Pew Research showed that only 31 percent of people in the UK felt satisfied with democracy, down from 52 percent in 2017.[4]

These studies would appear to suggest a disenchanted, disenfranchised, and disengaged body of citizens. That doesn't reflect what we saw at the citizens' assemblies. While it's true some participants were clearly unhappy about various aspects of local politics, they certainly weren't indifferent about the decisions being made in their area.

After all, each of them spent two whole weekends learning in-depth about a local issue and deliberating about what could be different with a randomly selected group of their peers. The depth and nuance of the final recommendations is testament to their enthusiasm and commitment. When they think it will make a difference, residents are more than willing to roll up their sleeves and help to solve the challenges their communities are facing. The issue is they are hardly ever asked to.

Given the right opportunities citizens will invest considerable energy into local politics. Given the right time and information, they can also help to solve its most intractable problems.

> " **I think I have gained the ability to actually take time to look and explore what is happening locally** "
> Participant, Dudley People's Panel

[2] The Hansard Society (2019) *The 2019 Audit of Political Engagement*. Available at: www.hansardsociety.org.uk/publications/reports/audit-of-political-engagement-16 [accessed: 28 May 2020].

[3]Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2019) *Community Life Survey, 2018-2019*. UK Data Service. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2018-19 [accessed 28 May 2020].

[4] Pew Research Centre (2019) *European Public Opinion Three Decades After the Fall of Communism*. Available at: www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/10/15/european-public-opinion-three-decades-after-the-fall-of-communism/ [accessed 28 May 2020].

The problems facing local councils

The Expression of Interest forms for the Innovation in Democracy Programme, completed by councils at the start of the process, are a fascinating insight into some of the most common challenges faced by local authorities across the country: ageing populations, strained social care systems, poor air quality, declining town centres, overstretched transport infrastructure and childhood obesity are just some of the most prevalent issues – and that's not to mention matters of planning and housing, which largely fell outside the scope of this programme.

These are all complex issues which can't be unpicked in a two-hour focus group meeting. Each calls for concerted action within communities, but many councils are regularly held back by another fundamental problem: their lack of reciprocal trust with residents. It's a negative feedback loop. Councils might lack the trust and support they need to respond decisively to some of their most thorny challenges, but a failure to act effectively only results in further frustration.

A growing body of evidence suggests that deliberative processes can help to break this cycle, building mutual trust between citizens' and local authorities, while also creating the mandate for positive change in a local area. Drawing on what we have learned while delivering this programme, this report sets out our advice for how and when to run a citizens' assembly in order to best capture these benefits.
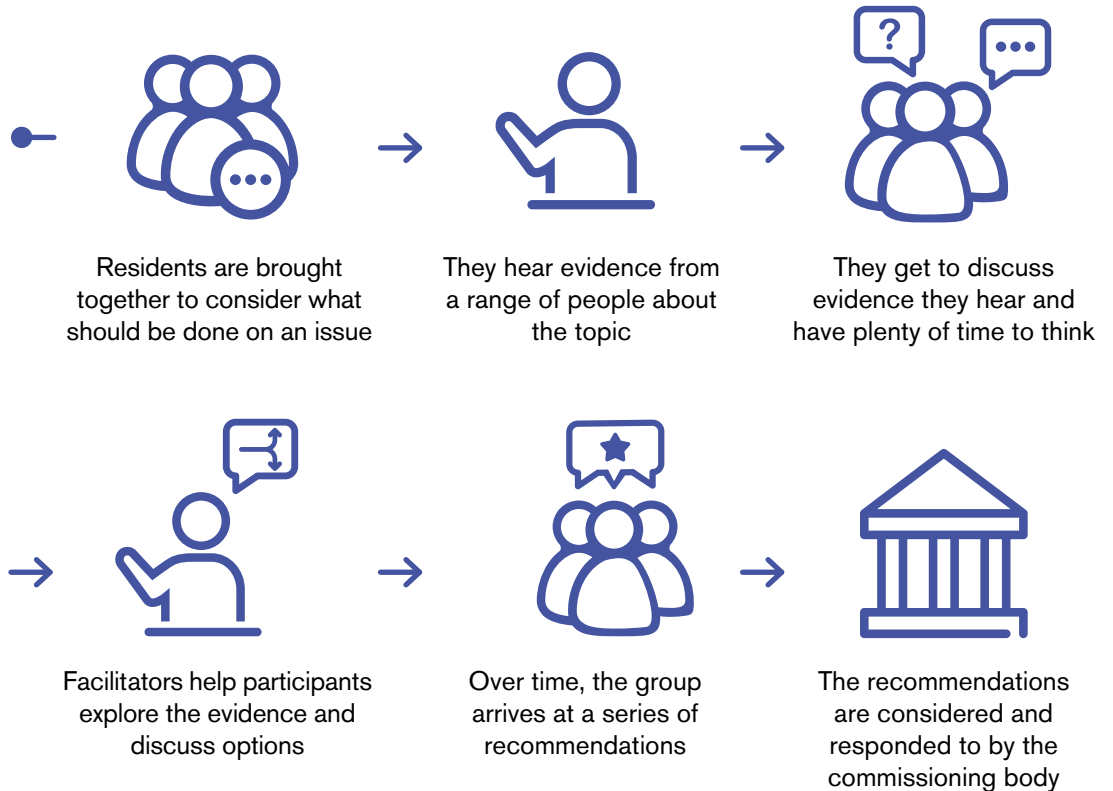
After the GCP Citizens' Assembly 72 percent of citizens' assembly members agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel more confident to engage in political decision making as a result of being involved in this citizens' assembly".

Citizens' assemblies

What is a citizens' assembly?

Citizens' assemblies are a type of democratic method that has been used around the world to empower citizens and solve intractable problems. A citizens' assembly brings together a diverse group of the public - selected at random but chosen to broadly reflect the demographics of the local community - to deliberate on an issue and recommend what should be done.

Residents are brought together to consider what should be done on an issue

They hear evidence from a range of people about the topic

They get to discuss evidence they hear and have plenty of time to think

Facilitators help participants explore the evidence and discuss options

Over time, the group arrives at a series of recommendations

The recommendations are considered and responded to by the commissioning body

There are several distinctive features of a citizens' assembly. Citizens' assemblies are:

- **Diverse.** They resemble the wider population in all its diversity, having been selected at random from that community to match the demographic characteristics of the population.

- **Deliberative.** Citizens' assemblies don't aggregate top-of-the-head opinions, but harvest deeper, more considered judgements.

- **Lengthy.** Lasting at least four days, they give participants the chance to get under the skin of a problem, developing their understanding and challenging their assumptions as they go, before arriving at a series of recommendations.

- **Informed.** Participants leave as experts in their own right, having heard from 'witnesses' with professional, lived and academic experience of the topic at hand.

- **'By the people, for the people'.** Recommendations are made by assembly members, not by politicians or officers. They are published without revision, caveat or manipulation and responded to by decision makers.

- **Professionally facilitated.** They are painstakingly designed and impartially facilitated to enable rich and meaningful participation by all assembly members, ensuring that everyone is given the space to express themselves freely.

These characteristics are underpinned by a set of essential standards. Involve has led the development of a set of standards for citizens' assemblies in the UK.

A citizens' assembly that adheres to these standards brings several distinct benefits. Citizens' assemblies:

- **Create good decisions.** Through extended discussion with their peers, participants come to understand the complexity of an issue and the trade-offs involved with any real-world decision, enabling them to make sensible and workable recommendations. Public deliberation might also surface evidence and insight that was previously unapparent to decision makers.

- **Create a public mandate for action.** This helps politicians make difficult decisions with legitimacy and confidence.

- **Strengthen transparency and integrity in public decision making.** They are insulated from groups or individuals with an agenda, or with power or money to influence a decision, and participants aren't swayed by electoral pressures. Sound information, careful thought and constructive deliberation can take centre stage.

- **Are inclusive and diverse.** They make space for those most disenfranchised by existing democratic processes. This reinforces both the legitimacy of the process and the quality of recommendations: when it comes to making good decisions, group diversity has been found to trump individual ability.[5]

- **Champion 'political equality'.** Just as 'one person, one vote' follows the principle of equality, so too does random selection. Every adult in the area has an equal chance of receiving an invitation.

- **Empower citizens.** They celebrate people's autonomy, agency and responsibility.

- **Incubate democratic skills and enhance public trust in the democratic system.** Knowledge, confidence, tolerance, social capital and public spirit have all been observed to grow through the course of a citizens' assembly. They can therefore act as gateways through which citizens re-engage with the democratic process and their communities more generally.

Renaisi's evaluation report assesses how far the IiDP Citizens' Assemblies achieved these benefits.

> " Combining representative and participatory democracy not only empowers residents but also councillors, because they are able to understand the issue in more depth which will help them to make evidence-led policy decisions "

Officer, Test Valley Borough Council

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[5] Landemore, H. E. (2012) *Why the many are smarter than the few and why it matters.* Journal of Public Deliberation: 8 (1) Article 7. Available at: www.publicdeliberaDon.net/jpd/vol8/iss1/art7 [accessed 28 May 2020].

Before the assembly

Deciding whether or not to run a citizens' assembly

Designing the assembly

Recruitment and communications

Design: before the citizens' assembly

Despite the growing body of evidence underscoring the benefits of citizens' assemblies, they are no silver bullet.[6] They are one of a number of participatory tools that should have a place in a well-functioning local democracy, but whether they are the best device depends on the purpose of the engagement and the desired outcomes.[7] Citizens' assemblies are an appropriate method if you want informed judgement by diverse residents to shape your future policy.

The viability of running a successful citizens' assembly subsequently depends on (i) the time and resources you have at your disposal; (ii) the political context; and (iii) the problem you are trying to solve.

If you read this section and think that a citizens' assembly isn't the best option for you, there are many other participatory approaches you can consider, many of which are listed in Involve's methods database.

The 'bottom lines': time and money

To run a successful citizens' assembly, you will need to invest sufficient time and money. While citizens' assemblies are more expensive and time consuming than many other consultation methods, they compensate for this in their depth and rigour. But you will only capture these benefits if you can properly resource your assembly.

There are a number of variables that make an assembly more or less resource intensive (the size, length and geographical scope of the process to name a few factors), so it's hard to put a precise figure on costs. For ballpark figures, you can view an indicative budget for an exemplar four day assembly with around 50 participants by following this link. The amount of time you need to deliver an assembly is equally contingent (determined not least by the size of the delivery team) but as a rule of thumb, you should schedule no less than five months. A more detailed breakdown of timings can be found by following the same link.

If you are able to commit significantly less time or money than we recommend, you could consider running a smaller process (citizens' juries generally involve between 12 and 25 participants) or focusing on another form of public engagement altogether.

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[6] Curato, N, Dryzek, J, Ercan, S., Hendriks. C.M. and Niemeyer S. 2017. T*welve key findings in deliberative democracy research*. Daedalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences vol.146, no.3, pp. 28-38.

[7] Involve's Knowledge Base guides you through the initial stages of choosing a participatory process, available at: www.involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/how-do-i-plan-participatory-process [accessed 28 May 2020].

Deciding whether or not to run
a citizens' assembly

The political context

A political context lends itself to deliberation when there is…	A political context is less accommodating when there is…
• A clear decision-making timeline and process that public deliberation can influence.	• Opposition from key decision makers.
• Cross-party commitment to the deliberative process itself, even if there is political disagreement on the issue.	• An overly diffuse decision making or implementation process for this particular issue.
• Clarity on how the citizens' assembly will fit into existing decision-making structures.	• No clear decision-making process into which recommendations can be transmitted.
• A long-term commitment to citizen participation, of which the citizens' assembly is just one manifestation.	• Inter- or intra-party disagreement on the value and legitimacy of public deliberation.
• A lack of action on an issue perhaps caused by differing views from active stakeholder groups or uncertainty of public opinion.	• A course of action that the council has already decided to deliver.
• A clear mismatch between residents' preferences and the council's position.	
• Prior commitment from decision makers to publicly respond to each recommendation with a presumption in favour of implementing them, and to transparently explain any decision they make not to implement a proposal.	

Securing the support of councillors is an important precondition to running a
citizens' assembly.

It's no surprise that deliberative processes make some councillors nervous. At first glance
they can seem a challenge to elected authority and councillors' traditional role as the primary
– and relatively autonomous – representatives of local residents. Councillors often feel they
have the most to lose if the process goes badly, fearing they may lose reputation or votes.

However, councillors are completely indispensable to the success of assemblies. There are four main reasons for this:

- They have good knowledge and understanding of local issues and views on the topic;

- They are the ideal people to champion the process to the council and the wider public;

- They understand the political constraints of office better than anyone else and can bring this knowledge to bear on the design process;

- They are the ones who ultimately decide whether the recommendations are enacted or not.

There are several things to consider when trying to bring councillors - and other senior figures in the council - on board with the process:

- The anxiety that some councillors feel is often due to misunderstanding the process. Good communication, guided by the principles outlined later in this section, can help councillors improve their understanding;

- Citizens' assemblies can give councillors a powerful mandate, helping them to act confidently on difficult issues. "What's hard for you?" is a good way to start the conversation with elected members;[8]

- It's worth considering what else motivates councillors and modelling your initial conversations accordingly. Is there reason to think that a citizens' assembly will end up saving the council money? Could a citizens' assembly potentially be a vote winner if it's done well?;

- Citizens' assemblies require councillors to play a different type of role – that of the enabler and the convenor rather than the driver. Training and induction will go a long way at the start of the process, helping to create new norms and expectations in the council that may continue to have positive effects long after the assembly is over. It works best when councillors themselves provide peer-support to each other, sharing learning with their counterparts;

- Deliberative democracy is a complement to representative democracy, not a replacement. Councillors will still have the final say but can make this decision armed with a strong evidence base and the express support of a cross-section of their constituents. In this way, it helps them to fulfil their duties as a local representative;

- It's vitally important that deliberative processes are not used irresponsibly by one party. Citizens' assemblies should transcend party loyalties, but in the wrong hands they can be used for political point-scoring, which undermines the integrity of the process and can tarnish its image in the eyes of the public. The onus is on the majority party and particularly the chief executive to 'depoliticise' the idea and reach across the aisle;

- The whole council should be clear where the citizens' assembly fits in the organisation's long-term strategy.

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[8]Cronkright, A. and Pek, S. (2019) *Sharing Sortition With Some Soul: How we can generate excitement about sortition with savvy and emotive communication*. Available at: www. democracyrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Sharing-Sortition-With-Some-Soul.pdf [accessed 28 May 2020].

It is also crucial to engage with local stakeholders and the wider public in the run-up to an assembly.

- You can hold a stakeholder briefing session about citizens' assemblies and how local residents can get involved.
- Residents' views on the chosen topic can be gathered beforehand and assembly members can then be briefed on the results of a pre-assembly engagement exercise.
- Residents can comment on the council's plans - either for the assembly or the chosen issue - via an online survey, or another method.

Throughout this section, we flag stages during the design process when it can help to involve councillors, stakeholders and the wider public.

The topic

Finally, you should consider whether your topic lends itself to a citizens' assembly or not. The following checklist should help you to decide whether your topic is suitable for long-form deliberation.[9]

A topic is likely to be right for deliberation if…	A topic is less likely to lend itself to deliberation if it…
- A decision needs to be made, but no option is clearly preferable; - There is a clear political dilemma, ethical quandary or complex trade-offs; - New perspectives and ideas may help people find novel solutions; - Council action risks being financially and/or reputationally costly and politicians currently lack the confidence or clear mandate to act; - Short term incentives or lack of public understanding obstruct long-term responses; - Politicians have a personal or political stake in the outcome (eg issues of electoral reform), therefore external perspectives can boost the impartiality of the decision.	- Requires a purely technical solution; - Requires a yes or no answer; - Is a foregone conclusion and the public's role would only be as a rubber stamp; - Requires an immediate response; - Is relevant only to a small segment of residents; - Is uncontentious, straightforward or inconsequential.

Most importantly of all, you need to choose a 'wicked issue' – one that eludes easy answers and makes life difficult for decision makers. Usually councils face many thorny issues, so the challenge is deciding which one to focus on. Once you have decided and are confident that you have the necessary resources and political support, you're ready to start designing the assembly.

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[9]For more information on this topic, see Pratt, J. (2005) *A Guidebook for Issue Framing*, from which some of these criteria have been drawn.

Setting the question

One of the first things to consider when designing your assembly is the question you want the assembly to answer.

A good question is a powerful thinking tool; it will keep the participants on task throughout the assembly and give rise to implementable recommendations. A poor question, on the other hand, can distract or confuse members, likely resulting in less workable recommendations.

As with choosing a good topic, this exercise is highly contextual. It depends on, for instance, the council's previous consultation on a topic and what is seen to be politically permissible by decision makers. There are no clear-cut rules to guide you to the perfect question but the newDemocracy Foundation have summarised some general principles to follow. These are included in the following table:[10]

Dos	Don'ts
• Start with a question, not merely a subject description.	• Don't frame a question that can be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'.
• Ensure that it is a neat fit for what the decision maker will ultimately decide. The remit of the assembly should be commensurate with the authority's scope of responsibility.	• Avoid compound questions (two questions in one). Keep each question separate.
	• Avoid decontextualized questions, or questions with an imprecise remit.
• Aim for brevity and clarity.	• Do not lead the participants toward a pre-determined answer or even give the unintended perception that you are.
• Make it neither too broad nor too narrow—the 'Goldilocks' option.	
• Sometimes it will be useful to precede or follow a question with an explanatory statement to provide context, set parameters or state trade-offs.	• Don't set a remit that's too small in scope to justify a costly process.
• Embed the trade-offs in either the question or supporting statement.	
• Test your remit —check that it makes perfect sense to an everyday citizen.	
• Share the problem/dilemma; don't sell a solution to the assembly.	
• Clearly state any parameters or boundary conditions (i.e. the amount of money that can be spent, the council's jurisdiction, the geographical boundaries of the problem). Officeholders can have a hand in setting these boundary conditions.	

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[10] This table is taken directly from the newDemocracy Foundation (2018) *Framing the Remit*, with some small additions and minor changes made to the language.

Designing the assembly

Examples of past questions

Getting the question right is more of an art than a science, so it helps to compare and contrast real questions answered by citizens' assemblies, including those chosen by the IiDP councils.

The following questions were chosen by the newDemocracy Foundation for three previous citizens' assemblies. The first two questions were judged to be successful and the final one was less successful. The evaluation of the questions and annotations we have included below are drawn from newDemocracy Foundation's R&D guide Framing the Remit.[11]

starts with a straightforward problem statement

Clearly stated trade-off

Yarra Valley Water needs to find a balance between price and service which is fair for everyone. How should we do this?

The question is left open

The remit is brief & specific

How should we best spend $2m to improve our community through the use of infrastructure spending?

Clear parameter

Clear parameter

The goal is clearly stated

Starting with an explanatory statement, rather than a question, could have clarified the remit

How are we to manage Noosa River better? What role should Council play and what resources should council apply?

First question distracts from fundamental inquiry: should council take on management of the river?

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[11] newDemocracy Foundation (2019) *Framing the Remit*. Available at: www.newdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RD_Note_-_Framing_the_Remit.pdf [accessed: 9 June 2020].

In the following tables, we list some brief reflections on the IiDP assembly questions: what worked well and what could have been done differently.[12]

It is clear from these reflections that the remit determined by the council doesn't necessarily align with what participants want to discuss. Balancing these interests is an art rather than a science, but it will help to involve different groups (internal and external) in the drafting of the question and to state any parameters unambiguously in the question.

"How do we reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide better public transport in Greater Cambridge?"

What worked	What could have been done differently?
• The question clearly stated the dilemmas associated with addressing congestion in Greater Cambridge. • The question was acceptable to the three different councils that form the GCP and the remit fell within the scope of GCP's authority. • The Greater Cambridge area encompasses both congestion hotspots and journey starting points, meaning participants could consider wide-ranging interventions.	• The question could have referenced financial constraints. • The question could have also benefitted from a clear timeframe, to focus the assembly on the immediate dilemma of reducing congestion, improving air quality and providing better public transport. • Participants wanted to question the merits of unchecked growth, but this was outside the remit of the assembly. The remit could have been expanded to include questions of growth or growth aims could have been referenced explicitly in the question to prevent confusion.

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[12] For a more detailed evaluation of the questions chosen for the three IiDP assemblies, see the IiDP Evaluation Report by the programme's independent evaluator Renaisi.

"What can communities and the council do together to make Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres places that are vibrant, welcoming and somewhere we are proud of? How will we know we are making a difference in: 12 months; three years; by 2030?"

What worked	What could have been done differently?
• Councillors played an active role in drafting the question and choosing which towns the assembly focused on. Achieving cross-party approval on the particular towns was crucial. • The timeframe helped participants to consider the feasibility of different measures and to prioritise interventions. • The assembly's aim is stated in the question: to make these specific town centres vibrant, welcoming and somewhere to be proud of. • The remit and resulting recommendations fell within Dudley Council's jurisdiction.	• The focus on two specific town centres meant some assembly members took on the role as delegates from 'their place' rather than representatives of the area as a whole. Early on in the assembly, those that didn't live in Dudley or Brierley Hill may have felt less equipped to contribute, though these dynamics weakened through the course of the assembly. Had the question referenced 'our town centres', or a single town centre, rather than Dudley and Brierley Hill, these issues could have been avoided.

"How do we improve the area around Crosfield Hall and the Bus Station to deliver the maximum benefit to Romsey?"

What worked	What could have been done differently?
• The question focused on a topic that could be influenced via a masterplanning process that was already underway. • Referencing a specific place in the question helped participants relate personally to the issue. They could also visit the area during the assembly, making the discussions more tangible. • The phrase "maximum benefit" challenged the assembly to consider the different dimensions of success – for business, community, people and planet.	• The question was narrow and perhaps could have been unpicked in a shorter period of time - albeit at the expense of some of the more holistic discussions about the value of place, community and heritage in Romsey.

Designing the assembly

Who should play a part in choosing the topic and question?

Inviting stakeholders and decision makers to play a part in selecting the topic and question can ease any anxieties they may have about the process. It can also help you to find a topic and a question on which deliberation can make meaningful headway, so that it doesn't simply rubber-stamp an uncontroversial question.

1) Local residents and stakeholders

a. You could organise a focus group with members of the public (perhaps focused on underrepresented groups), stakeholders, the advisory group or even assembly participants to test the clarity of the question and whether it's perceived to be legitimate.[13] You could even divest some of the agenda-setting power to a separate mini-public (see the Ostbelgien Citizens' Council, referenced on page 45, for a striking example of this).

b. You can crowdsource ideas and comments through platforms such as CONSUL (used in the Madrid example referenced on page 45). Many Wikisurveys allow respondents to rank or comment on other users' statements, enabling you to cluster the different opinion groups and understand where there is agreement and division in the local community. You might find that some knotty issues in the council are uncontroversial among the public, or that some of the council's assumptions about residents are questionable.

2) Politicians

a. Politicians should also help to co-design the remit of the assembly and have a say over other design decisions, both in their capacity as representatives (speaking on behalf of the wider community) and in a political capacity (making clear their problems, constraints and aspirations).

Deciding how long the assembly should last

As a basic standard, any citizens' assembly should last a minimum of four days. The three IiDP councils chose to run their assembly over two weekends (four days), but other assemblies – especially on climate change – are lasting much longer and are not always spread across whole weekends. The UK parliament's assembly on climate is meeting for the equivalent of four weekends and the French *Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat* will take place over seven weekends.

The difference in the length of assemblies is usually explained by one or more of the following factors:

- Budget: money is time - the larger the budget, the more time you can afford.[14]

- Size: the larger the group, the longer it will take for them to deliberate, negotiate and reach shared judgements.

- Remit: issues involving a single dilemma (the allocation of a budget, for instance) will require less time to unpick, but issues with multiple cross-cutting trade-offs and unintended consequences will take much longer (such as climate change or technological change).

- Scale and influence: when an assembly is operating at significant geographical scale, or when it carries a substantial degree of influence, organisers might decide to set aside more time.

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[13] Focus groups were an important part of the pre-engagement on the recent Waltham Forest Citizens' Assembly. The council worked with local groups to test out the language that was used in the question, which helped to build their faith in and ownership over the process.

[14] Each IiDP council was given £60,000 by DCMS and MHCLG to run their assembly. This doesn't include support from our team or any extra resource the councils contributed to the process.

Designing the assembly

Deciding the size of the assembly

Larger assemblies can more accurately reflect the demographics of society at large. If you recruit more people, you are able to apply more selection criteria which helps to ensure a more diverse group of participants.

But there are many things to consider other than hitting demographic targets. If an assembly is too large it can be hard to sustain high-quality deliberation and finding common ground will take much longer. It will also cost you a lot more money.

There is a trade-off between breadth and depth. The right balance will always depend on circumstance (for instance, how much money you have, how much time you have, how complex the issue is, the level of support in the local community), but to give an indication, local councils in the UK have tended to recruit between 45 and 60 assembly members.

Selecting an advisory group[15]

Although the assembly should be led by a professional – and ideally independent – team with specialist expertise in facilitation and process design, in previous UK assemblies it has been standard practice to delegate aspects of the selection and review of expert speakers and evidence to an independent advisory group.

This group must be perceived to be impartial, or at least balanced. In the past advisory groups have aimed variously for 'impartiality', 'balance' or 'cross-party representation', though in practice most of them combine these aspects in different ways.

1) 'Impartial' advisory groups tend to be made up of experts and specialists with no direct 'skin in the game' who provide a strategic perspective on the issue.

    a. For the Romsey citizens' assembly, the advisory group was made of people with expertise from the community development sector, planning and urban development, local enterprise, as well as an international deliberative democracy expert.

2) 'Balanced' advisory groups invite a range of different stakeholders on board to reflect the different perspectives on the issue.

    a. Dudley Citizens' Assembly focused on improvements to two places - the town centres of Dudley and Brierley Hill. For this reason, it was vital the advisory group was representative of both areas with representation from the third sector, community trusts, and the business improvement districts - as well as an international deliberative democracy expert.

3) Cross-party advisory groups aim for political balance rather than a full spectrum of perspectives. The group will include politicians representing their parties (probably proportionate to the local balance of power).

    a. The Citizens' Initiative Review Commission, which oversees the Citizens' Initiative Review process in Oregon, is partly appointed by the leadership of the main political parties in the senate. The Commission also includes participants and facilitators from previous processes.

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[13] Focus groups were an important part of the pre-engagement on the recent Waltham Forest Citizens' Assembly. The council worked with local groups to test out the language that was used in the question, which helped to build their faith in and ownership over the process.

[14] Each IiDP council was given £60,000 by DCMS and MHCLG to run their assembly. This doesn't include support from our team or any extra resource the councils contributed to the process.

[15] Although this handbook suggests that an advisory group can have a direct say over the selection of evidence and experts, as was the case for the IiDP assemblies, this isn't the only available governance structure. For instance, it is also possible for a monitoring team to oversee the balance and integrity of this process, without having a direct say over the speakers and evidence that are selected. If the monitoring team takes issue with the choices that have been made by the organisers, additional arbitration bodies can determine the correct course of action.

Whichever of these you choose, select your advisory group according to agreed criteria and provide the members with terms of reference, clearly defining the group's purpose and its specific responsibilities.[16] It is also good practice to publish this information to improve the transparency of the process.

Choosing evidence and 'witnesses'

When we say 'experts' we don't simply mean academic specialists and those with technical understanding of a topic. We invited three different types of 'expert' to the IiDP assemblies:[17]

- Knowledge experts: individuals with specialist scientific, technical or legal knowledge who provide information.

- Stakeholders: representatives from interested parties (lobbying or interest groups) who usually provide evidence advocating a certain perspective.

- Experts by lived experience: members of the public who have knowledge about an issue as a result of their personal experience, and so who can share their personal insights.

In most previous citizens' assemblies in the UK, the advisory group has determined which themes and perspectives need to be represented at the assembly and made suggestions for who might fit these criteria. This can be done in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders and experts, or with assembly participants. It is important that there is an appropriate balance of key perspectives.

Where there are credible arguments that contradict one another, all sides of the argument should be represented.

The next step is to select speakers according to the chosen criteria.[18] Before the assembly starts, this is generally the responsibility of the advisory group, at least in previous assemblies in the UK. However, assembly participants should also be able to request speakers or perspectives during the process (see the 'during the assembly' section).

Each of the IiDP assemblies had between 15 and 20 expert speakers, but there are no hard-and-fast rules about how many you should invite. What's important is that participants are receiving balanced information and enough of it to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic that will enable them to make an informed decision.

Briefing the expert speakers also helps in this regard. They should avoid jargon and aim for clarity, without watering down the complexity of the issue or resorting to emotive rhetoric.

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[16] GCP's mini-site sets out the advisory group's terms of reference clearly. It is available at: www.greatercambridge.org.uk/city-access/greater-cambridge-citizens-assembly/advisory-group [accessed 28 May 2020].

[17] Based on classifications in Lansdell, S. (2011) *The use of experts in public dialogues*. Sciencewise-ERC.

[18] For an example from Ireland, see The Citizen's Assembly (2017), *First Report and Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly: The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution*, p.52. Available at: www.citizensassembly.ie/en/the-eighth-amendment-of-the-constitution/final-report-on-the-eighth-amendment-of-the-constitution/final-report-incl-appendix-a-d.pdf [accessed 28 May 2020].

Letting the public suggest experts or submit evidence

An online form could also allow the wider public to nominate expert speakers or submit evidence for the process, expanding the pool from which the advisory group can draw. GCP used their existing engagement platform, Consult Cambs, to do this. Crowdsourcing may be especially helpful for assemblies focused on local issues, where the best experts and evidence may be less visible to the advisory group.

The challenge with incorporating submissions from the public into a citizens' assembly is that, while the assembly is carefully selected to be representative, external evidence submissions may skew towards those better engaged with the process or those mobilised by a campaign. If there are a high volume of submissions, manually moderating it can be very time-consuming. Digital tools can be used to address these issues in several ways, speeding up certain kinds of analysis and curation that result in more balanced and digestible submissions:

1) Changing the structure of input: for instance, asking demographic questions that better facilitate a representative sampling.

2) Asking highly structured questions: this allows clustering software such as pol.is to identify and map different opinion clusters, displaying the widest range of views in a non-weighted way, thereby preventing local interest groups from dominating the agenda.

3) Automated categorisation of output: natural language processing could help to cluster responses or identify cut-and-pasted passages. Open source natural language processing tools are available, but require some specialist skills.

If you want to involve a particular part of the community in curating the citizens' assembly's evidence base, you could organise a narrower consultation exercise and feed the outputs into the assembly. 'Enclave deliberation' - deliberation among members of a certain group - could also take place within citizens' assemblies, if 'enclaves' of marginalised groups are encouraged to discuss and critically review the exercise as it unfolds.

A Deliberative Poll on Reconciliation in Australia was preceded by closed meetings of indigenous populations in different regions. These discussions informed the subsequent summit which was stratified to reflect the demographics of Australia as a whole.

Before the Test Valley citizens' assembly, lived experience workshops were held with young people, older people, disabled people and low-income groups. The conversations were turned into discussion maps using a mind map software called Coggle. These discussion maps were then shared at the assembly itself (*see image in the argument visualisation section of this report*).

Choosing your recruitment criteria

Before you start recruiting participants for the assembly, you need to decide what you would like the eventual demographic make-up of the assembly to be. Most citizens' assemblies are recruited to reflect the wider public in terms of gender, age, location of residence, ethnicity and a few other chosen criteria. The local context and the issue you have chosen might shape the criteria you choose:

- The issue: depending on the issue, you might also want to recruit people according to their behaviour, their understanding of an issue or their beliefs. For example, the national Climate Assembly UK recruited assembly members to ensure they reflect wider public concern with climate change (ie from not at all concerned to very concerned). Having diverse perspectives represented in the assembly tends to improve the quality of deliberation.

- The context: the local context and nature of your topic might also influence the criteria and quotas you choose to recruit by. For instance, if the issue you have chosen disproportionately affects disabled people, disability should at the very least be one of your selection criteria. In some cases, it might be right to oversample certain groups, though you should be prepared to defend this decision as it would undermine the 'representativeness' of the assembly.

If you are struggling to get a response from a particular demographic group, it might help to supplement sortition with more targeted recruitment, perhaps in partnership with 'community ambassadors' who are trusted by that community.

The GCP assembly example illustrates the importance of local context to recruitment. The GCP board includes representatives from Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, which are all controlled by different parties. Those living in the district and the wider travel to work area rely more heavily on cars than those living in Cambridge city. Therefore, it was important to include geographic spread and travel behaviour as selection criteria, to account for diverse transport experiences within Greater Cambridge and the wider travel to work area and to ensure that each of the partner councils felt their constituents were being fairly represented.

Recruiting the participants[19]

Once you have determined the recruitment criteria, it is standard practice to delegate the recruitment itself to an independent agency. Here we briefly summarise the steps the Sortition Foundation, the organisation commissioned by the IiDP delivery partners to run this process, went through in recruiting for the three IiDP assemblies.

Stage 1

Around 10,000 invitations were posted to households in the area randomly selected from the postcode database

→ Invitees were asked to register their interest to participate either online or by phone, giving some demographic details

Stage 2

From those who registered, a random-stratified sample was built to match pre-determined demographic criteria

→ Those in the final sample are contacted and told where and when they are needed

Two factors in particular tend to influence how many people respond to the initial mailout:

- Interesting topics and engaging questions will attract more people, as will well-designed letters written in plain English[20]. To view the IiDP invitation letters follow this link

- It is general practice to pay participants' expenses and to give them a stipend for their service. If participants come for the money and stay for the experience you know that you're doing something right: these are precisely the people who wouldn't turn up to a regular council meeting.

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[19] For more information on the 'civic lottery' recruitment methodology, see MASS LBP (2017), *How to Run a Civic Lottery*. Available at: www.masslbp.com/civic-lottery-guide [accessed: 29 May 2020].

[20] It is also possible to randomly select via phone calls or email, but letters tend to carry more weight and are more likely to end up in the right place. You can also randomly select from an alternative database, such as the electoral register, but the post-code database is the most comprehensive available in the UK.

Recruitment and communications

Place	Recruitment criteria
Dudley	Gender, age, geography, occupation, household type, disability and ethnicity.
Test Valley	Gender, age, geography, occupation, travel frequency and ethnicity.
Greater Cambridge	Gender, age, ethnicity, geography, socioeconomic status, travel frequency, travel mode.

" **All people, walks of life, age groups. Very representative of [the town]. "**
Participant, Test Valley Assembly

The second stage of the recruitment for the IiDP assemblies is best explained with an example.[21] If 20 percent of people in your area fall within the 30-44 age bracket and you want your assembly to reflect this, then a large number of possible assemblies with 20 percent of the people in that age bracket can be determined from the pool of registrants. After some weighting to equalise the chance of each registrant being selected, one of these assemblies can be randomly selected. The same applies to each of the criteria you have chosen. This process can be automated using digital tools.

Once you have met all your demographic criteria you will need to confirm with each invitee. If anyone drops out, you randomly select from the pool until you draw another fitting the same demographic profile. You should continue to contact participants in the run up to the first meeting: they are much more likely to attend if you do so and you can double-check whether they have any questions or requirements for you to be aware of.[22]

General communications principles

Our experiences as part of IiDP signalled how important good communication is from the outset to sell citizens' assemblies to council staff, politicians and the wider public.

The principles of good communication and the characteristics of good deliberation are about as contrary as can be. As a citizens' assembly organiser, you design for lengthy reflection, sober analysis and balanced negotiation. As a communicator you search for emotional appeals, inspiring narratives and key protagonists.

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[21] This is not the only way of running a 'civic lottery' and you may choose a slightly modified process. For slightly different methods of recruitment see MASS LBP (2017), *How to Run a Civic Lottery*; The United Nations Democracy Fund and the newDemocracy Foundation (2008), *Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections* and Gerwin, M. (2018), *Citizens' Assemblies: Guide to Democracy that Works*.

[22] Cheap commercial mailing software (such as Mailchimp) will help you to send more accessible emails and allow you to see who has opened the email. This helps you to decide where to concentrate more expensive means of communication, such as phone calls or mail.

There are a few general principles of good communication we have observed while running the liDP assemblies which should guide your internal and external communications:[23]

- Lead with principles ("we think all voices need to be heard") and the issue at hand ("we need to act decisively on X issue") before talking about the process ("a citizens' assembly is...").

- When talking about the process, stress that citizens' assemblies are a tried and tested method: they can and do help councillors and communities solve local problems.

- Tell a narrative that is engaging and, where possible, personal. The experience of participants, the journey of the assembly and the real-world impact of the recommendations are all ready-made narratives.

- If people try to pick holes in the process, explain that while citizens' assemblies are no panacea, they are more inclusive, deliberative and balanced than alternative methods of engagement that councils use.

Lining up your communications

In the run up to the assembly, it helps to be as clear and transparent about the assembly as possible. Early communications should seek to explain and champion the project and can follow the general principles outlined above. You can set up a website dedicated to the assembly,[24] add an FAQ sheet and post the details of the assembly as they emerge.[25]

Here are some examples of communications assets you can prepare before the assembly begins:

- The assembly running order (the agenda can also be sliced up into Twitter cards).

- Some information on the evidence (summaries or slide shows).

- An explanation of how the assembly will pan out (this could be an interview with the lead facilitator).

- A statement of support from a key decision-maker, committing to consider and respond to what the assembly recommends.

- Background assets explaining citizens' assemblies, sortition and other key information about the process (these could be graphics or interviews with key organisers).

- A clear process for people to sign up as assembly observers if they are interested.

The media are an important ally in spreading awareness and understanding of the assembly. It helps to engage with the media early on in the process and to invite local journalists to attend the assembly. The liDP media briefing is a good place to start when explaining the process to journalists.

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[23]Some of these principles are adapted from those contained in Pek, S. and Cronkright, A. (2019) *Sharing Sortition With Some Soul: How we can generate excitement about sortition with savvy and emotive communication*. Available at: democracyrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Sharing-Sortition-With-Some-Soul.pdf [accessed 28 May 2020].

[24]For examples, see the Dudley People's Panel website, the GCP Citizens' Assembly website and the Romsey Citizens' Assembly website.

[25]For an example, see the liDP FAQs.

During the assembly

Facilitation
Facilitation >

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The deliberation stage
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Facilitation

Delivery: during the citizens' assembly

All citizens' assemblies involve processes of learning, deliberation and decision-making, but how these processes are sequenced and facilitated varies significantly. Any number of different learning formats, facilitation methods and decision-making processes have been used in past citizens' assemblies and how you choose to design your own assembly will depend on the particular issue you have chosen and the context in which you are operating.

You can access detailed process plans for each IiDP assembly by following this link, but we urge you to treat these as thinking aids rather than fixed templates. A good process will always be tailored to its specific context. It will also depend upon good design and preparation, without which the assembly will not succeed - regardless of the quality of the process plan.

This means that, aside from setting out general principles of good facilitation and restating the importance of thorough preparation in the run-up to the assembly, it's difficult to give any definitive or exhaustive guidance about how best to run an assembly. This section simply signposts some of the key tools and methods to hold in mind as you deliver your assembly, based primarily on our experiences in Dudley, Greater Cambridge and Test Valley.

Facilitation

Facilitation methods are crucial at every stage of the process - from any pre-engagement workshops you run with the council and community to post-assembly sessions with councillors and stakeholders. Facilitation is a process of enabling groups to work cooperatively and effectively together and it emphasises the involvement of all participants in a meaningful way. The aims of the role are:

- To help participants make better use of the knowledge and ideas that they collectively possess - it is not about providing knowledge to participants;

- To be neutral in terms of content - but not the process;

- To act as a trusted third party and not skew the debate to favour any one side or group;

- To have an awareness of and to mitigate power differences within a group;

- To be distinct from that of a chair or other more directive leadership role in meetings.

Facilitation principles:

- **Providing purpose.** The citizens' assembly should begin with a clear articulation of its aims, agenda and what will happen with the results. It's important for participants to feel able to participate and that their contribution is worthwhile. It is also important to manage expectations at this stage; this includes explaining what is out of scope.

- **Collectively agreed ways of working.** Participants should agree guidelines for how the deliberation will take place. This will support participants to manage their own behaviour and gives facilitators the license to step in should any issues arise. This helps establish conditions in which all participants feel able to participate.

Facilitation

- **Framing.** Participants are best able to engage with a complex subject where they have agreed a framework through which to view it. The first round of deliberation should focus on the values on which participants will base their discussions and final decisions.

- **Seating plan and room set up.** Different seating plans will ensure that assembly members discuss the issues with a range of people. This stops groups getting stuck in particular cycles of arguments.

- **Enough time.** Participants need sufficient time to digest, discuss and work through the information they hear. It is better for participants to have enough time to consider a more limited number of topics and produce a smaller range of outputs than to rush through a larger agenda.

- **A clear structure.** Participants need to go through a logical series of steps in order to arrive at their conclusions. This includes setting participants tasks, such as ranking options at their tables, that create a framework for discussion (as opposed to just saying "talk"). The aims set out at the beginning of the assembly should be revisited throughout, reminding participants of why they are there and the purpose of the process.

- **Small group discussion.** Personal reflection and small group discussions must be built in so that all participants, particularly those who are less confident, can form and put forward their own opinions. Most of the deliberation during citizens' assemblies takes place around small tables, with 5-10 people allocated to each table. At the IiDP assemblies, some of the table facilitation was led by council officers, who had previously been trained in basic facilitation.[26] When groups return to plenary, the tables should be able to report back their discussions and comment on the ideas emerging on other tables.

- **Personal reflection.** After each panel and Q&A, participants at the IiDP assemblies were asked to write themselves a postcard to capture the information and arguments they found most compelling. As well as providing an aide-memoire for later, this process of reflection gives each participant the space to collect their thoughts and make sense of what they have heard.

- **Note-taking.** Notes of the discussion should be displayed openly on Post-it Notes and flipchart paper. We recommend writing one idea on each Post-it so the different comments and suggestions can be arranged and clustered.

- **Accessibility.** The success of the mini-public depends on all participants feeling able to engage. This includes ensuring that the venue and all activities take into account any accessibility requirements participants have. No jargon should be used and any key terms must be explained.

- **A range of diverse exercises.** Variety is critical to keeping participants engaged and making the assembly an enjoyable experience for everyone. It also helps make the process to be more inclusive of participants with different learning and thinking styles.

These facilitation principles should be applied throughout the assembly, in the learning, deliberation and decision-making stages, to which we now turn.

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[26] Including council officers as table facilitators has clear benefits, including building capacity within the council, but these benefits should be balanced with the risk that certain observers may question officers' ability to facilitate impartially. Whatever you decide, you should be transparent about the role of the council within the assembly.

The learning stage

> " [I] gained an appreciation of democracy and how I'm not always right. [It was] good practice listening to other people, [an] incredibly useful experience. "
> Participant, GCP Citizens' Assembly

Letting participants select speakers

If there is enough time, participants can contribute to the selection process, together with the advisory group. In all its randomness and diversity, the assembly is perhaps the most legitimate 'advisory group' in the eyes of the public and it is uniquely placed to identify information gaps that might be inhibiting progress. At the start of the process, participants will still be new to the topic and may not feel ready to suggest speakers. Even if this is the case, they can still be involved in this process in a different way or at a later stage:

- Participants could define the speaker selection criteria, from which speakers are selected.

- Participants could choose speakers from a longlist of candidates. DemocracyCo in Australia colour code speakers according to their biases and ask participants to 'choose a rainbow' from the list of speakers.[27]

- Participants can be invited to suggest or select speakers before the assembly, but they may not feel able to make an informed request at this stage. As the assembly goes on - and if the assembly sessions are well spaced out - you can invite new speakers or add new topics based on participants' requests.

Letting participants question speakers

The learning stage of a citizens' assembly should not be a passive process. Participants should be encouraged to think critically about the information they are hearing and have the opportunity to question or challenge speakers. The learning stage should be a constructive period of group discovery based on what participants feel they need to learn, rather than solely what speakers want to say.

Besides giving participants a say over the selection of speakers and discussion topics, there are several other ways to promote a dynamic learning environment:

- Participants can be given yellow (slow down) and red (stop) cards to raise if they can't follow a presentation. The speaker can then stop and clarify the point they are making.

- In between presentations, participants can highlight any unanswered questions and these can be recorded and revisited in future sessions. Questions can be managed by a Q&A tool such as www.sli.do, as well as being physically collected on Post-it notes.

- You can also bring experts into conversation with assembly participants through 'speaker carousels', as happened at the Dudley and Test Valley assemblies. Speakers circulate around the different tables at regular intervals, giving participants the opportunity to ask questions, challenge speakers and fill in any knowledge gaps. During each rotation, some tables can be given time without an expert so they can digest what they have heard and decide what they want to ask next.

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27 Breckon, J., Hopkins, A. and Rickey, B. (2019) Evidence vs Democracy: How 'mini-publics' can traverse the gap between citizens, experts, and evidence. Alliance for Useful Evidence. Available at: media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Evidence_vs_Democracy_Report_Final.pdf [accessed: 29 May 2020].

The learning stage

- Participants can be given training in critical thinking during the learning stage of an assembly. In several citizens' assemblies in Australia, participants have been trained to engage critically with arguments and to recognise biases in themselves and others.

> **Developing creative and interesting ways for the assembly members to engage with the experts' evidence is a key component of the deliberative process.**
> Local authority officer, Test Valley Council

Using a range of learning formats

Although expert presentations are the most common method for delivering learning at assemblies, you could also experiment with other formats.[29] For instance:

- At the Test Valley Citizens' Assembly, participants spent time walking around the area south of Romsey town centre with several experts, looking at the places they were discussing. 'Lived experience zones' were also set up in the assembly, where participants could engage with information and 'argument maps' collected from previous lived experience sessions (see page 35 for an example of these argument maps). The zones were led by someone who had taken part in the consultation.

- In Australia, participants are often given printed information. This is easier to assemble between sessions and can be easily curated to meet the requests of participants, but it risks overwhelming participants if too much is shared too early on in the process.

- In Finland, a citizens' jury was shown a video of an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimers who was unable to attend the session due to illness. This was to help participants empathise with different experiences of ageing (which was the topic of discussion).

- An Australian deliberative forum on pandemic planning used narrative scenarios to help participants grapple with the real-world implications of their deliberations.

The expert speakers you choose should avoid jargon and aim for clarity, without watering down the complexity of the issue or resorting to emotive rhetoric.

[28] Ibid.

Argument visualisation

There are various argument mapping tools which visually arrange claims, evidence and counterarguments, making it easier for participants' contributions to be understood and analysed. Mapping arguments without any weighting or ranking can help to stimulate deliberation without steering conversations in any particular direction. Alternatively - or subsequently - monitoring the level of support for different statements can help you to guide the discussions onwards. Though you should make sure all proposals have been properly considered by participants before discounting any of them.

The submissions made by the public in advance of an assembly can be mapped for the benefit of the assembly, or argument maps could be populated in real time as the assembly progresses. This could serve as a reference point for participants and could also form part of the assembly's output alongside its recommendations.

Mindmapping can be done physically using paper and Post-its or can be aided by digital software such as Coggle or Argdown, both of which allow groups to map arguments collaboratively.

Allowing the public to feedback on argument maps or agendas can work as a way to highlight areas not yet discussed, which might lead to a choice by the assembly to make changes to the agenda. Any such mechanisms should be designed to empower the assembly rather than undermine it.

Figure 1. Example of a digital mind-map from a pre-assembly session in Romsey[29]

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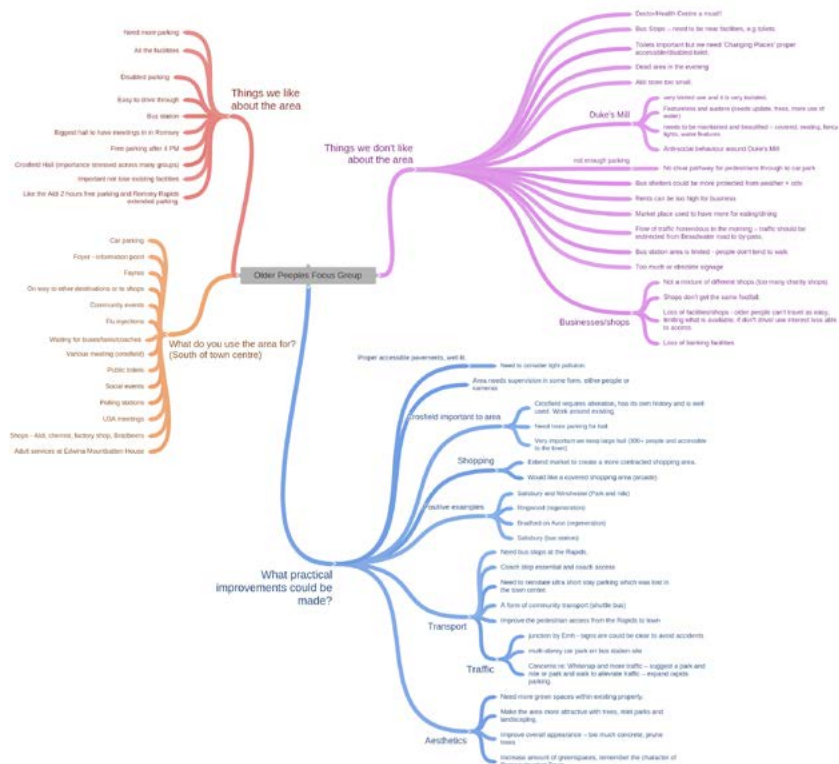
[29] This mind map is taken from the Test Valley older people's focus group which preceded their assembly. A write up of the use of argument visualisation in pre-evidence sessions to citizens' assemblies can be accessed at: docs.google.com/document/d/1GlnQdjw3PnfChtgqz6ZVjOAlHH4MkKg4zVj1uc6Poc0/edit#heading=h.taz3bpab7q7e [accessed: 29 May 2020].

The deliberation stage

Enabling online deliberation outside the face-to-face sessions

Although we did not encourage this at the IiDP assemblies, civic technology platforms or online bulletin boards can be used to continue deliberations outside of the assembly, with either members of the assembly or members of the public.

While the digital tools exist, they should be balanced against the needs and purpose of the assembly in question. It may be considered inappropriate where structured deliberation is an important aspect of the assembly or where uneven amounts of spare time outside the assembly means some voices will likely be amplified over others. For these reasons, we did not make arrangements for ongoing online deliberation at any of the IiDP assemblies.

These issues are more pronounced when non-participants are being invited to join the online deliberations. Online contributors will almost certainly be less diverse than those in the assembly and there is a danger of organised interest groups dominating the discussion, so you should think carefully before creating these opportunities for non-participants.

There are additional logistical questions about when and how online and offline deliberation should be blended. The simplest option is for the online exercise to take place before the offline assembly, but online deliberations could also happen simultaneously, and contributions could be introduced to the assembly at planned intervals.

The decision stage

Approaching decision-making

There are various mechanisms by which a citizens' assembly can decide upon its final recommendations. Some organisers aim to avoid a formal voting process by achieving consensus or near consensus around negotiated recommendations, that have been gradually composed, tweaked and refined by the whole group through the course of the assembly.[30] Once everyone in the room signals that they are happy with a proposal (sometimes simply by a show of hands) it becomes a formal assembly recommendation.

Previous citizens' assemblies in the UK, however, have tended to decide upon recommendations through a more formal voting process, including the three IiDP assemblies.

Voting

Finalising the recommendations through a secret vote allows participants to make their decision in private, free from any external pressure. It also allows commissioners to understand the degree of support for each recommendation among assembly members. But it's important that voting doesn't come at the expense of meaningful collaboration and deliberation - by entrenching people's opinions, for example, or oversimplifying complex issues. There are several ways to mitigate these risks:

- Votes should not be binary - preferential voting was used in each IiDP assembly.

- There should be ample space and time for the group to establish common ground on different themes, ideas and solutions before anyone expresses their judgement in a vote.

- The ballot options should not be predetermined but should be formulated by assembly members themselves during their deliberations.

- Participants should be able to add a more nuanced commentary to their vote, suggesting why they voted as they did, whether they would alter anything about the ballot measures as they stand and if anything would change their judgement. This could help facilitators to identify areas of agreement that are not visible in the polling results.

- Voting should not be used prematurely in the process, as this could entrench people's perspectives.

Mentimeter and Slido are popular online voting tools, both of which have been used at various points during the IiDP assemblies. This saves you distributing the ballots and counting the votes manually.

However, the online tools listed above do not allow for a preferential ballot (whereby participants rank options rather than select their favourite[s]) or score voting (in which options are given a 'score') which is one reason why paper ballots are still commonplace at citizens' assemblies.[31] An Excel sheet can be used to calculate the results of preferential votes, allowing fast reporting of results.

A mixture of these methods may be appropriate, with preferential voting and score voting done via paper ballots and cheaper e-voting reserved for supplementary recommendations or procedural matters, where simple polling is required.

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[30] A helpful guide to the collaborative recommendation writing process can be found in The United Nations Democracy Fund and the newDemocracy Foundation (2008) *Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections*, p.188. Available at: www.newdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/New-Democracy-Handbook-FINAL-LAYOUT-reduced.pdf [accessed 29 May 2020].

[31] Opavote.com supports preferential voting and other voting procedures, though we have not used this site for a citizens' assembly yet so cannot vouch for its suitability.

Comms and engagement

Involving councillors, stakeholders and the wider public during the assembly

Although councillors and local stakeholders should be kept at arm's length from the actual deliberations, there are several other ways they can get involved with the process as it happens:

- They can attend as observers to see for themselves the quality and integrity of the process.

- They can appear as a speaker to put forward their point of view or share their personal experience.

- Arrangements can be made for stakeholders to advise participants or evaluate recommendations.

  - MASS LBP in Canada organises roundtables led by assembly members and attended by stakeholders. Assembly participants learn from members of the wider community and local stakeholders advise participants on how to refine their recommendations.
  - The Citizens' Initiative Review process in Oregon gives stakeholders the opportunity to write feedback which will then be reviewed by members of the panel as it drafts its final outputs.

The benefits of this kind of stakeholder engagement should be carefully balanced with the obvious drawbacks: local stakeholders are likely to have a specific agenda and won't necessarily represent the population at large. Their influence should, therefore, be carefully managed.

Communicating the assembly while it's happening

Once the assembly gets going you will have to be much more proactive with your communications.

The key is not to justify each individual decision at the end of the process, but to consistently explain the process throughout and show that it works. There are several key objectives in this regard:

1. To show that the assembly is a trustworthy and effective way of making decisions and to illustrate this with assets, media and a clear description of the process.

2. Make sure those not recruited as assembly members can understand that while their involvement may be limited, (i) the assembly reflects the demographics of the local community and (ii) there are other ways for them to get involved.

3. Illustrate that decision makers are 'on board' with the assembly, understand the process and its value and are willing to absorb wider lessons of the process.

Broadcasting from the assembly[32]

In addition to the normal press release and photo call, there are a number of different options for creating contemporaneous records of the assembly, some relying on audio-visual technology. The benefits of transparency need to be balanced with the need for privacy. General practice is to livestream and release expert presentations, but to keep the discussions of assembly members private. The videos should be made publicly available online during and after the assembly. By uploading the clips to YouTube, a free transcription can be added through auto transcribe.

The general proceedings can also be captured live by social reporters, including photo montages and vox pops of those in attendance (participants, facilitators, politicians).

1. Live blogging can be arranged and embedded into a website.

2. Multiple updates can be sent out on existing tools you use (such as WordPress).

3. You can live tweet the event on a hashtag. Assembly members and observers can also tweet about the process as long as they don't discuss the assembly's content or information about other participants.

4. You can identify several people in the assembly to act as media ambassadors, who can talk to journalists about their experiences of the process.[33]

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[32] Live streams, notes and slides from the IiDP assemblies can be found on Dudley Citizens' Assembly website, the GCP Citizens' Assembly website and the Romsey Citizens' Assembly website.

[33] Until the recommendations have been published, there should be clear ground rules in place. Media ambassadors should not give away too much about the content of the deliberation and they should be warned against interacting with local pressure groups who are likely to get in touch with them.

Comms and engagement

The following table summarises the messages you might want to convey and assets that can help.

What's the message?	How can I communicate it?
Basic information about the citizen assembly process	• Press release. • FAQ sheet. • Twitter Q&A. • Simple social media graphics. • The assembly schedule. • Live blogging and tweeting.
The thoroughness of the assembly and balance of the evidence	• The assembly schedule. • Live streamed clips, slides and any other evidence given to participants. • Advisory Group members, terms of reference and selection criteria. • Testimony from councillors who observed the process.
The independence of the assembly	• Advisory Group members, terms of reference and selection criteria. • A clear question and process of deciding this. • Summary or graphic of the recruitment process. • Summary of facilitation ground rules. • Media of the 'handover' can be useful here - it shows the recommendations have been made independently. • Testimony from councillors who observed the process.
Inclusiveness and diversity	• Explaining the recruitment criteria, who took part and how it broadly matches the wider public. • Testimonials by varied participants. • Summary of ways in which the wider public can get involved, online and offline.

After the assembly

Impact

Impact

Impact: after the citizens' assembly

Once the citizens' assembly itself ends, all work turns towards maximising its impact. Citizens' assemblies are only as good as their real-world legacy.

But what does 'impact' mean? Influence on public policy – the most commonly cited 'impact' of deliberation – is certainly of utmost importance, but there are many other important impacts of a citizens' assembly. During the Innovation in Democracy Programme we have been focusing our attention on three types of impact:

1) Impact on local administrations' policy

2) Impact on the internal culture and practice of local councils

3) Impact on the assembly members and the wider community.

How to impact policy

If you plan, design and deliver a good assembly, while including appropriate and diverse stakeholders and communicating the process effectively you can expect the final recommendations to carry some force.

There are several additional ways to build upon this momentum in the aftermath, while the assembly reports its recommendations. Here we list six key considerations:

1) Once they are finalised, the recommendations should be listed in a report. As recommended in the previous section, recommendations should be formulated by participants, not a series of options simply voted on by the assembly. The report should also make clear the rationale and intent of each proposal. At the very least, this should be written in the participants' language (as noted down on Post-it notes and other forms), but participants should ideally be able to participate in the writing of the report itself.[34] The final report is not going to look as polished as a regular consultation document but it's likely to look a lot more authentic. For the sake of accessibility, you should consider releasing the assembly's final report in multiple formats, including as a short executive summary and on mobile-responsive webpages and e-book formats. The IiDP reports are accessible via this link.

2) Before the formal 'handover process', it can help to arrange an informal session between councillors and assembly participants. This will enable a more in-depth discussion than the standard cabinet meeting allows for and can help to bridge the divide between the deliberative assembly and the more standard processes of representative democracy.

3) The final recommendations should then be formally passed over to the council's decision-making body. It's best if this handover is led by a group of assembly participants who can also discuss their experience and explain the assembly's decisions (though they are there to represent the assembly as a whole so should not be able to put their own spin on the recommendations).

4) Assembly participants, perhaps alongside members of the wider public, can form a group to monitor the uptake and implementation of recommendations over time. This can be budgeted for up-front. Scrutiny committees could also play this role.

5) Subsequent funding bids can be focused on securing investment to deliver the assembly's vision.

6) Subject to the assembly's consent, the recommendations can be submitted to decision makers or local stakeholder groups for feedback before they are finalised and published. This functions as a trial run. The assembly can test the popularity and feasibility of the recommendations and perhaps decide to make some tweaks before they are finalised. This can also help to settle politicians' and stakeholders' nerves as the assembly enters its final phase.

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[34] A helpful guide to the collaborative writing process can be found in The United Nations Democracy Fund and the newDemocracy Foundation (2008) *Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections*, p.188. Available at: www.newdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/New-Democracy-Handbook-FINAL-LAYOUT-reduced.pdf [accessed 29 May 2020].

Impact

In Dudley, two members of the citizens' assembly presented their recommendations to the council's Place Scrutiny Committee, helping to bring the process to life for decision-makers who heard first-hand about how the recommendations were decided upon and why they were important to the participants. One assembly member told stories about their grandchildren and their aspirations for the town centres they will grow up in using pictures of their family.

"Watching the citizens' assembly feedback its key messages on the final day was a real highlight. It was inspiring to see the participants so clearly articulate their vision for the future of our place… There was a real energy in the room, and that came through in the comments calling for ambitious, bold action. "
Local authority officer, GCP

It's vital that you clearly communicate the timeline of decision-making and key milestones along the way, sending out regular updates via social and local media and email. Without good communications and transparency, participants will likely become cynical, regardless of whether the recommendations are implemented or not. It might also help for councils to identify quick wins and enact these early on to signal intent, but it's essential for councils to keep reporting back to residents over time, especially when the question specifies a long-term timeframe as was the case in Dudley.

In February 2020, The Romsey Future Partnership and Test Valley Borough Council integrated the recommendations of the Romsey Citizens' Assembly into their draft proposal for redeveloping the area south of the town centre. These plans have since been shortlisted for the National Planning Awards 2020 in the stakeholder engagement category. The winner will be announced in September 2020.

Impact

Culture shift within councils

The internal culture of a council goes some way to explaining how willing an authority may be to experiment with deliberative processes.

While this is not the place for a detailed discussion of cultural shift in organisations, there are several ways to deepen the imprint of a citizens' assembly on your council's working culture and engagement strategies:

- Council staff should understand where the citizens' assembly fits in with the council's long-term corporate strategy.

- Specialist training can be provided to the council in the run-up to the assembly, including in facilitation. Some of those attending the training can act as table facilitators during the assembly itself. The distinctive skills required for running a citizens' assembly – such as facilitation, process design and deep listening – can be embedded in future council activities, both internally and with the wider public.

- Peer-support networks can be set up within and between organisations to facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge. Authorities that have already run citizens' assemblies can support other councils on the journey and the particular teams that led the assembly can embed learning across their council.

Innovation in Democracy Programme Peer Learning Network

The IiDP Peer Learning Network was set up to share the learning made across the programme and to help maximise the legacy of the three citizens' assemblies. The core network was made up of participants from the three participating authorities but there were also been opportunities for other councils to participate in the network.

The Peer Learning Network was brought together for four workshops and a conference. At these events, the local authorities were able to propose discussion topics, sense check their ideas and collectively work together to solve any problems they were facing. Details of the events are as follows:

- Peer learning workshop 1: Introductions, preliminary learning and planning for the rest of the programme

- Peer learning workshop 2: Bringing councillors on board (featuring councillors from each of the participating authorities)

- Peer learning workshop 3: Disseminating the learning from the programme (featuring representatives from other councils from across the UK)

- Peer learning workshop 4: Evaluating the programme (co-hosted with Renaisi, the programme evaluator)

- The Innovating Local Democracy Conference (a conference attended by local authority staff and practitioners from across the UK and further afield).

On top of these in-person sessions, an online 'action learning' set was formed to discuss how to communicate citizens' assemblies. These discussions resulted in the 'Telling the story of an assembly' and 'Communicating the recommendations of an assembly' guides.

Additional 'impact and learning' workshops were scheduled to take place within each authority to spread learning from the programme across council teams. These have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we hope to reschedule them in the future.

Impact

The assembly itself can exemplify the value of citizen participation to the council at large, as can any co-design methods you might have used during the planning of the assembly. Over time, it could provide the rationale for more comprehensive and participatory local engagement frameworks.

Some local and regional authorities outside of the UK have gone an extra step and sought to embed public deliberation into their standard decision-making procedures. Although this hasn't yet been attempted in the UK, the examples listed in the box below demonstrate different models for 'institutionalising' public deliberation.

The creation of new standing deliberative bodies

• In Ostbelgien (the German-speaking community of Belgium) a permanent, randomly selected citizens' council can set the agenda for up to three separate citizens' assemblies each year.

• In Madrid, a since-disbanded 'observatory' of randomly selected residents was instituted to monitor municipal action and recommend improvements. It could also propose city-wide referendums on issues proposed by citizens using the online citizen participation tool Consul.

• In Toronto, randomly-selected 'reference panels' meet every two months for two years. One discusses the city's public transport and the other discusses planning issues.

The requirement for deliberative engagement in certain circumstances

• In Oregon, the Citizens' Initiative Review is formalised in the state's referendum process. A group of 24 randomly selected residents weigh up the pros and cons of the referendum options and release a statement which is included in the official voters' pamphlet.

• In the Austrian state of Vorarlberg, 1,000 signatures proposing a particular topic triggers a government-sponsored citizens' council.

• In Gdansk, Poland, the mayor is required to run a citizens' assembly on any proposals with at least 5,000 signatures.

"My work on citizens' assemblies has, without doubt, been the highlight of my career so far. At the training session arranged as part of the IiDP, I pleaded to be a table facilitator (in a rather embarrassing way) – but it worked. My first, rather nerve-wracking, citizens assembly was in my home city of Cambridge and I haven't looked back since.

I find facilitating a group of people from different backgrounds listening (most of the time) to each other's views totally life-affirming. It has certainly given me a new-found confidence and lease of life.

I think the combination of sortition (not just the usual suspects), independent facilitation (not a done deal), national expert speakers and an extended timeframe (to get to grips with the issues in a meaningful way), makes for gold standard practice. I'm really keen to replicate this magic in my day job."
Diane Lane, Community Engagement Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council

Impact

Continuing the relationship with your citizens

As confirmed by a growing body of evidence, citizens' assemblies often send people back out into the world with a newfound understanding of a particular issue, an augmented sense of common purpose and a greater drive for civic endeavour. A good process will predictably produce these outcomes, but there are a few other things you can do to encourage these changes and to inspire a wider group of people in the community:

Involving residents as co-designers, witnesses or advisory group members. As suggested earlier in this section, a wider group can also be brought together to discuss the recommendations or monitor their implementation.

- You could reach out to those who responded to the initial mailout but who were not selected and find ways of involving them in future engagement exercises.

- Key principles of deliberation and/or the learning material curated for a citizens' assembly can be embedded in other consultation processes.

- Participants in the assembly and other people involved in the process can join alumni groups. These can either be task-oriented working groups (for instance, following up on the implementation of recommendations or continuing to act on the issue at hand) or looser platforms into which participants are able to direct their newfound political energy. The council could subsequently reengage this group and involve them in designing, facilitating and publicising future processes.

> Talkshop took the 30 hours or so of deliberation that the assembly members took part in at the 2018 Citizens' Assembly on Adult Social Care and turned it into a discussion kit that supports deliberation over a couple of hours. This allows many more people to understand the deliberative process and to have the sort of conversations that members of the assembly did – albeit in much less time. Councils could consider funding and publicising these types of 'everyday deliberation' to complement and expand the reach of more formal assemblies.

Communications following the assembly

Once the citizens' assembly is complete, we'd suggest collecting up your different assets and assembling them into a multimedia report - possibly a website or web page - that helps to tell the story of the assembly. mySociety have written a guidance paper on citizens' assembly websites which outlines some key design and editorial principles for a citizens' assembly website, as well as the information you should include before, during and after an assembly.

Creating a film of the assembly is another way of showcasing the assembly. A well-produced film is more likely to draw in a wider audience than a technical report.[35]

A multimedia record of the assembly should aim to demonstrate that the process was in-depth and comprehensive - and can be referred back to as the recommendations become part of the political process for decision makers. In time, this digital footprint of the activities of the assembly can help to tell the story of the decision, and how it was made. The materials could also be used in future engagement processes, or in learning institutions.

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[35] Introducing the Toronto Planning Review Panel and When Citizens Assemble are two excellent films about citizens' assemblies which influenced the film made about our own project. The IiDP film can be accessed here: https://vimeo.com/431783148/93d7ddbce3

Conclusion

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Conclusion

We are launching this handbook at an unprecedented time in June 2020. The state of lockdown in many countries in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has made in-person citizens' assemblies unfeasible for some time. Bringing a random group of people from all corners of a community to deliberate and eat buffet lunches together over several days doesn't exactly shout 'social distancing'.

As a result, the organisers of citizens' assemblies have had to choose between postponing, cancelling or adapting their plans. The Climate Assembly UK and the French *Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat* have both been swiftly and successfully moved online.

This has been a challenging process but also a period of rapid learning about the opportunities and limitations of digital learning and deliberation. It is likely to have a significant influence on how deliberative processes are designed in the future.

Although this handbook focuses on in-person assemblies, we hope that many of the principles and insights can also support those designing online deliberative processes. Most of the fundamental aims, concepts and standards will continue to apply.
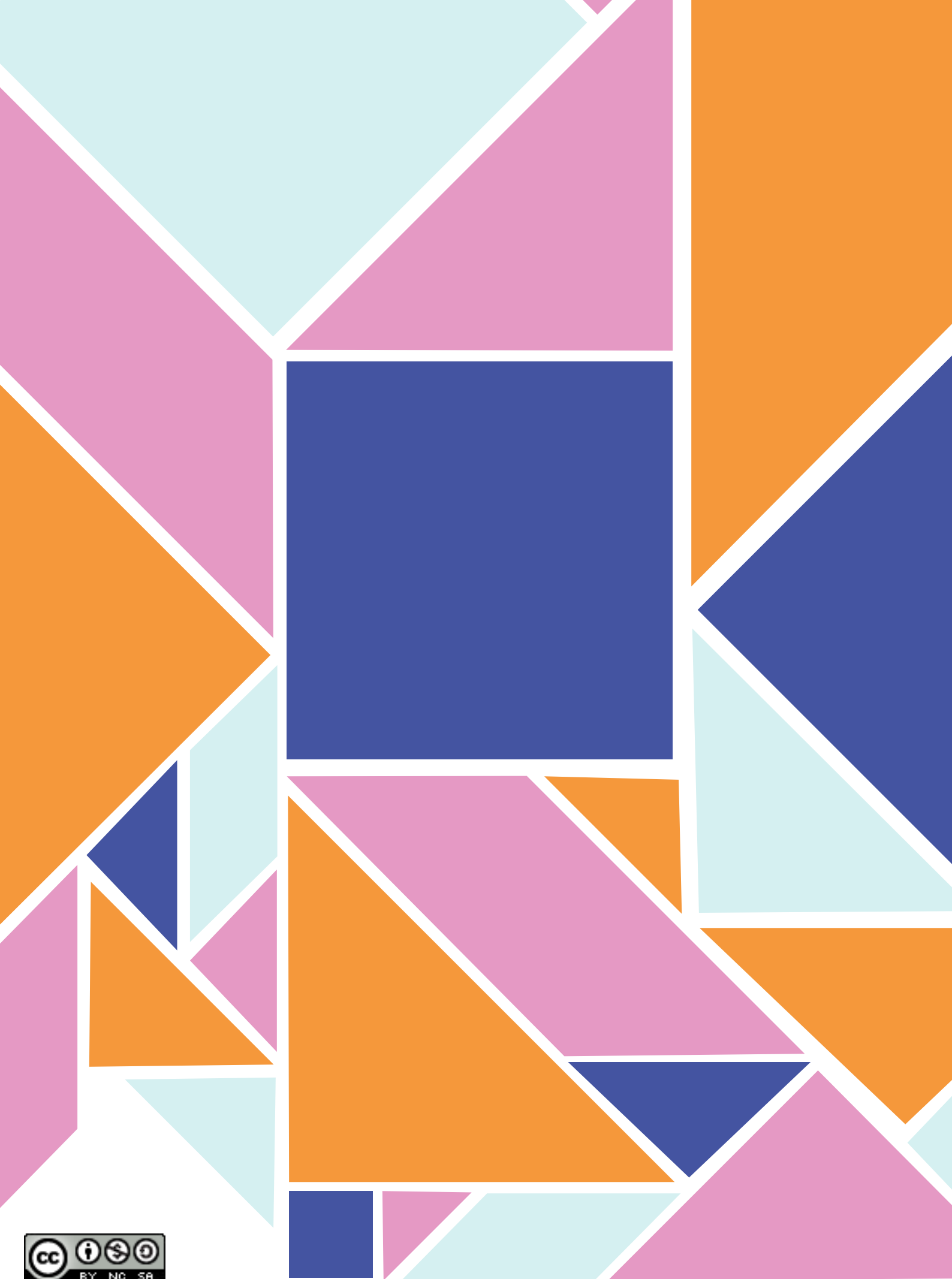
The changing landscape

At the same time, the pandemic has exposed a range of urgent challenges and acute trade-offs we face as a society - from school to welfare, work to healthcare. As local and national governments confront profound and difficult decisions, deliberative public engagement will be more important than ever in supporting effective responses and securing public consent for future policy.

And as we begin to emerge from the immediate public health crisis and sizeable face-to-face gatherings become possible once again, we hope this handbook will become more relevant than ever. Citizens' assemblies can and should enable local and national governments to bring their residents on board as they confront the daunting decisions that lie ahead.

Taking the learning from the Innovation in Democracy Programme and the many other examples of deliberative democracy from around the world, we hope you can play your part in this growing global movement putting citizens at the heart of decision-making.[36]

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[36] OECD (2020), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave.* Paris: OECD Publishing, doi. org/10.1787/339306da-en.