



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	To provide an update on the introduction of a citizens' assembly	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Corporate Management Team [21 st February 2024]	X
	Pre Cabinet [29 th February 2024]	X
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group [7 th March 2024 / 13 th March 2024]	X
	Cabinet [25 th March 2024]	



Is this an Executive Decision:	YES	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	YES	Is the Report Confidential: If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	NO N/A

Essential Signatories:

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE

Monitoring Officer: **John Teasdale**

Date 06/02/2024 Signature

Chief Finance Officer: **Lloyd Haynes**

Date 09/02/2024 Signature

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Cabinet

Date: 25th March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	To provide an update on the introduction of a citizens' assembly
PORTFOLIO:	Leader of the Council
CHIEF OFFICER:	Mark Rizk
CONTACT OFFICER:	James Abbott & Daniel Caulkett Ext. No. 1244 & 1608
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All Wards

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. The Corporate Plan contains a target to "Introduce a Citizens Assembly".
- 1.2. Following initial discussions officers were tasked with researching this based on the existing "Citizens' Jury" approach implemented in other local government organisations.
- 1.3. This report provides a proposed model including an overview of the process and costs of introducing a citizens' jury in line with Corporate Plan target ID06.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. A Citizens' Jury is an inclusive, deliberative body formed of local members of the public who are involved in the decision-making process of a particular topic, developing specific recommendations on tough or complex policy questions.
- 2.2. Research including discussions with other Local Authorities indicate that 20-25 members would be an ideal number for the implementation of a Citizens' Jury.

- 2.3. The process would be led by an independent consultant who will provide support as the lead facilitator.
- 2.4. The process would incentivise members of the public to participate – for example a stipend (a fixed sum payment for participating) or other incentives such as shopping vouchers.
- 2.5. The jury process could be implemented should a tough/ complex policy question arise that would benefit from the use of a Citizens' Jury.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council set out a Corporate Plan target to 'Introduce a Citizens Assembly' in an effort to improve local democracy – this was subsequently clarified as being aligned to the existing principle of a Citizens' Jury.
- 3.2. The Innovation in Democracy Programme (liDP) trialled the involvement of citizens in decision-making at local government level through innovative models of deliberative democracy. The government supported three local authorities to open up a key policy decision to their residents through citizens' assemblies with the programme running from November 2018 to March 2020.¹
- 3.3. To gain insight and understanding into the holding of a jury, the Council liaised with the local authorities in the liDP pilot, as well as other Local Authorities who have incorporated Citizen Assemblies/ Panels/ Juries into their decision-making process.

4. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. The Introduction of a Citizen's Jury contributes to the Council's Improving Local Democracy corporate priority.

5. What is a Citizens' Jury?

- 5.1. A Citizens' Jury is an inclusive, deliberative body formed of local members of the public who are involved in the decision-making process of a particular topic, developing specific recommendations on policy issues. Citizens' Juries can be used for a wide variety of policy areas but are most effective surrounding complex questions, providing a wide variety of opinions.
- 5.2. Citizens' Juries can also be described as a Citizens' Assembly or a Citizens' Panel, with one key difference. Whilst a Jury typically consists of 20 to 25 members of the public, a Panel could consist up to 50 members of the public whilst an Assembly could consist up to 250 members of the public².

¹ [The Innovation in Democracy Programme \(liDP\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/programmes/innovation-in-democracy-programme)

² [Citizens' Jury | Involve](https://www.involve.gov.uk/citizens-jury/)

- 5.3. Following research and discussions with Camden Council, Cheshire East Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership who have all conducted a form of deliberative democracy, it was outlined how crucial it is to have an important topic which would benefit from the Citizens' Jury approach and which is going to garner a large public interest.

6. Proposed Model

- 6.1. Discussions with other Local Authorities reinforced that 20-25 members would be an ideal number, therefore, if the Council was to hold a Citizens' Jury it should consist of 20 to 25 members of the public, representing various demographics including age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The members of the public eligible to take part must be citizens (i.e. a person who lives, works or study's in the Borough).
- 6.2. The process would be led by an independent consultant who will provide support as the lead facilitator – the facilitator will be an experienced individual in the selected topic area. The consultant will design and run the jury on behalf of the Council. It will be the responsibility of the consultant to design and implement a public awareness campaign to inform residents and encourage participation.
- 6.3. The consultant will establish a selection process for jurors ensuring the jury make-up is representative of East Staffordshire. Further to this, the consultant will hold total responsibility over the preparation and running of the jury to promote the independence of the project and promote greater cooperation from residents.
- 6.4. Following conversations held with various local authorities, it is also advised that the event be held in a neutral venue or a venue with importance in relation to the topic area. This has been recommended on the basis that by holding the event in a neutral venue or venue with importance to the topic area, it promotes the independence of the jury.
- 6.5. For complex issues, the Jury would meet over the course of two consecutive weekends. Sessions would be held on the Saturday and Sunday of each of the two weekends.
 - 6.5.1. The first day the jury meets would be dedicated to understanding the process they are about to embark upon, receiving a brief overview of the issue as well as getting acquainted with other jury members.
 - 6.5.2. The next two sessions would be dedicated to hearing from expert witnesses surrounding the topic area, with witnesses representing all sides of the particular topic area, ensuring jurors receive a balanced picture of the issue. Once a witness has finished presenting, there would be time for jurors to ask questions of the witnesses as well as time to deliberate amongst the group.

- 6.5.3. After all the hearings have been completed, the rest of the time would be set aside for the jurors to have final deliberations of the issue at hand, this would include providing a decision/ any recommendations surrounding the topic area. The decision/ recommendations can be reached by either consensus or voting.
- 6.5.4. The deliberation phase between jurors would not be open to members of the public, this would be to ensure they feel comfortable in expressing their opinions without outside pressure. However, on the final day, when jurors present their findings, recommendations and how the decision was reached, members of the public could be invited to attend with a final report being published and made available for all to see.
- 6.5.5. The final report would be presented at the next available Cabinet meeting with a designated number of jurors invited to attend and present the juries' final recommendations.
- 6.5.6. Where appropriate, for less complex issues, this schedule could be condensed into one weekend.
- 6.6. Costs are yet to be determined, however, as there would be the need to appoint an independent consultant who would provide support as the lead facilitator, there would be an appropriate competitive procurement process undertaken should the jury process be initiated. Estimated costs are outlined at 7.3.
- 6.7. The discussions with other local authorities reinforced the need to incentivise members of the public to participate – with an initial payment of some sort for attending the first session and then a larger payment for returning to the following sessions.
- 6.7.1.1. For example, one local authority provided jurors a stipend of equivalent value of £10 per hour of engagement therefore £150 in the form of shopping vouchers for the duration of 15 hours (£50 to be administered after the 1st weekend and £100 after the 2nd weekend).
- 6.8. It is proposed the value of incentives, whether that be in the form of shopping vouchers or stipends, would be agreed on an ad-hoc basis dependent on the topic area selected to be discussed and proportionate to its complexity. These incentives should be designed in a way to encourage citizens to participate in the process and maintain retention across all sessions.
- 6.8.1. For example, a higher stipend for weekend two to encourage return attendance.
- 6.9. Dependant on the location of the proposed venue and participant numbers, an approach of transporting participants to the venue would be agreed on an ad-hoc basis. When agreeing a relevant venue, appropriate to the size of the agreed jury and subject matter, it is important to in parallel with this, assess and remove any barriers which could impact citizens' attendance at jury sessions.

- 6.9.1. For example, in some cases it might be appropriate to factor in transport costs into the level of stipend, or following other local authorities and provide community transport in aiding participants travel to and from the meeting venue.
- 6.10. It is important that for a jury process to be a success, there is an appropriate question/ topic to be addressed. The citizens' jury approach can be implemented where there is a tough/ complex policy question which cannot be unpicked using other consultation methods – The Council Administration will determine when a Jury should be used and the associated subject area.
- 6.11. By having a topic area which is important to the people of East Staffordshire, it will promote engagement as well as a wide variety of members of the public applying to get involved.
- 6.11.1. For example, topics which other local authorities have held a jury include: the Cost of Living crisis, Evening and Night Time Strategy, Climate Change, Regeneration of Town Centre.
- 6.12. It is important to remember that whilst the Jury will be invited to present their recommendations to Cabinet, the acceptance of proposed recommendations will be subject to subsequent Cabinet debate and decision. Should any of the recommendations not be taken forward, this could negatively impact the perceptions of the process and may make it more difficult to attract members of the public to participate in future juries. Further to this, implementing a jury bears a higher cost than more traditional consultation methods.
- 6.13. Therefore, if a suitable topic arises whereby a Citizens' Jury is proposed, this model outlined would be implemented with the finer details to be agreed at a later date.

7. Financial Considerations

This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: James Hopwood

- 7.1. The main financial issues arising from this Report are as follows:

Capital	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Citizen's Jury	£0	£0	£0

- 7.2. Total costs will be subject to member approval of specific process (for example stipend values and jury size); it will also be subject to the outcome of the competitive procurement process for the procurement of the consultant.
- 7.3. Research with other local authorities has indicated the total estimated cost of running a jury is likely to be proportionate to the jury size, and estimated to be £1000 per participant. Therefore, we estimate a Citizens' Jury with 20 to 25 participants would cost in the region of £20,000 to £25,000.

7.4. There is no budget currently.

8. Risk Assessment and Management

8.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

8.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

8.2.1. Opportunity to improve the public's engagement in the decision making process over a key issue that is important to the people of East Staffordshire

8.2.2. Opportunity to engage different sections of the community who are not regularly involved in the decision making process.

8.2.3. Opportunity to raise awareness of Council decisions.

8.2.4. Opportunity to provide insight that may have been previously unapparent to decision takers.

8.3. **Negative** (Threats):

8.3.1. Implementing a jury bears a higher cost than other consultation methods

8.3.2. Risk of no meaningful recommendations taken forward impacting on future juries engagement levels.

8.3.3. The success of the Jury process is dependent on engagement/ participation from members of the public.

8.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

9. Legal Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team:
John Teasdale*

9.1. There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

10. Equalities and Health

10.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this time, but equality and health impacts would be assessed a Jury be implemented specifically to what is being proposed.

10.2. **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and

health impact assessment is not required.

11. Data Protection Implications – Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

10.1. A DPIA must be completed where there are plans to:

- use systematic and extensive profiling with significant effects;
- process special category or criminal offence data on a large scale; or
- systematically monitor publicly accessible places on a large scale
- use new technologies;
- use profiling or special category data to decide on access to services;
- profile individuals on a large scale;
- process biometric data;
- process genetic data;
- match data or combine datasets from different sources;
- collect personal data from a source other than the individual without providing them with a privacy notice ('invisible processing');
- track individuals' location or behaviour;
- profile children or target marketing or online services at them; or
- process data that might endanger the individual's physical health or safety in the event of a security breach

10.2 Following consideration of the above, there are no Data Protection implications arising from this report which would require a DPIA.

12. Human Rights

12.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

13. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

13.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) N/A

14. Recommendation(s)

14.1. To consider the contents of the report.

15. Background Papers

15.1. None