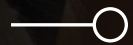




# Innovation in Resident Participation in London Local Government



“When did a survey ever  
change anything we did?”

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## Why is this report important?

This report looks at some of the newer and more innovative methods that are emerging to improve resident participation in London local government. Such participation can improve decision-making, policy-making and the design of public services.

Although this report focuses on innovation, these 'innovations' are only occasionally new technologies. Innovation also encompasses new, creative design solutions (some of which use technology) applied in service of ideas around co-creation and participation that have long existed and that are well established in research and in practice.

There are a number of reasons why local authorities would want to improve and increase resident participation, including:

### **1. It leads to better public outcomes**

By collecting better information, then analysing it and acting upon it in better ways, councils can make better decisions to improve the lives of residents.

### **2. It enhances public trust in local government**

When local authorities show they are listening to residents and want their input in decision-making, residents trust authorities more and give them licence to innovate on their behalf.

### **3. It improves social cohesion and empowers marginalised communities**

By including diverse groups in decision-making, local authorities can improve social cohesion and empower the communities and individuals who participate.

### **4. It creates greater legitimacy for government to make (hard) decisions**

Big or tricky challenges in resource-constrained organisations and political environments can be met by opening up decisions to generate public legitimacy.

**Innovative methods of resident participation are increasingly seen as relevant and important by politicians. For example:**

- In Barnet, a new council was elected in 2022 with the promise to “do more to listen to residents and involve them in designing council services and addressing issues that affect them”.
- Hammersmith & Fulham Council has said that “co-production - doing things with residents not to residents” is one of its priorities.
- Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has put participation at the heart of their Recovery Strategy, ensuring that historically marginalised communities have a greater impact in how the council supports their local area.
- Boroughs like Newham and Camden have put participation as a core tenet of their political strategy for the long term.



## What is the broader context of this report?

Part of the context for these new efforts is the poor level of trust and democratic engagement in councils generally. The 2022 review of trust in government by the Office for National Statistics shows that only 42% of the population trust local government. Business as usual is leaving residents with a deteriorating trust in local government.

The problem is not a lack of engagement - in fact, many boroughs in our research cited consultation burnout amongst frequent responders to surveys as a problem. Rather that the quality of our current approaches to engagement is not up to the ambition of boroughs or the expectations of residents.

LOTI interviews revealed some of the inadequacies: for statutory consultations, managers rarely try anything new or innovative as they view it as a legal box-ticking exercise; for non-statutory engagement, consultations are often done to either confirm a decision already made by a council or as a tick-box to enable a council to do something they were always going to do and say they “consulted residents”. Public engagement exercises are sometimes poorly coordinated within councils, and insights often fail to be connected or shared across service areas.

Most importantly, there is no lack of engagement happening in councils but, often, the missing link is ensuring that the views and insights of residents who are engaged are actually acted on and that the process is communicated back to residents. There is no point in doing consultations if they don't meaningfully help the council operate better, but sadly, this was often not the case. As one officer put it, “when did a survey ever change anything we did?”.

*“When did a survey ever change anything we did?”*

Interviewee from local government

## What does this report contain?

This report has been written with three different driving forces in mind: the improved outcomes for Londoners' lives that better participation methods engender; the political ambitions of London boroughs; and the ambitions of local government officers who work on resident participation and engagement to improve their practice and craft.

The report focuses on two things:

### 1. Identifying new, emerging and/or innovative practices in London

– our research revealed creative new approaches and tools so we will share these examples first and foremost.

### 2. Identifying leading practice elsewhere that London can learn from

– to help London councils be inspired by the good practices of organisations outside of the capital, we highlight several case studies.





## The report falls into three sections:

### **A. How creative and new design approaches are leading (mostly offline) forms of innovation**

– this ranges from large participatory budgeting initiatives to a handful of residents providing feedback in creative ways on new topics.

### **B. How digital tools and new technologies are helping boroughs collect new types of insights from residents**

– this includes evaluating the use of existing engagement tools but also highlighting where new tools unlock avenues for residents to share different types of insight and intelligence.

### **C. How boroughs are embracing participation**

– we explore how local government can improve practice in a resource-constrained and fragmented work context.

A.  
**An emerging wave  
of participatory  
approaches**





## A. An emerging wave of participatory approaches

**Improving the level and quality of resident participation is a challenge that local authorities across London are embracing.**

In political and resource-constrained environments – and in London’s unique context with 32 boroughs and the City of London as well as the regional Greater London Authority – councils are having to find better ways of listening to residents and improving how they create policies and services as a result.

The principles behind these approaches are not always new, but the collective energy with which councils across London have embraced them certainly is, as are some of the creative solutions that are emerging, which this chapter explores.



## Devolving decisions to residents

In line with an international 'deliberative wave', councils in London have been exploring high-impact and high-profile initiatives that start to delegate decision-making power to residents. These have primarily been through citizen assemblies (where sortitioned, representative groups of residents deliberate on a topic and make recommendations to a council) and participatory budgeting (where residents propose ideas and vote on how a budget should be allocated to those ideas).

### Citizen assemblies

Citizen assemblies are a particularly popular policy tool at the local level. OECD research found 52% of assemblies happen at a local level compared to regionally or nationally. The most popular topic for citizen assemblies in London is climate and environment, with nine assemblies run relating to this<sup>1</sup>. These can tackle different sub-themes, like air quality (Kingston and Wandsworth), greening the borough (Newham) net zero and biodiversity (Barnet) or declaring a climate crisis (Lambeth).

Internationally, climate was the third most popular policy area in the OECD research (behind planning and health), so its prominence in London might imply that London councils are particularly concerned with the policy area - or that residents are consulted in it - compared to other cities.

<sup>1</sup> Climate or environment related assemblies have been run by: Barnet, Brent, Camden, Hackney, Kingston, Lambeth, Newham, Wandsworth, and the Mayor of London/Greater London Authority

Other topics explored within London have included health and care (Camden), data (Camden), data in healthcare (the GLA), and stopping hate crime (Waltham Forest).

Citizen assemblies in these contexts were mostly useful for boroughs because they a) provide a mandate for more long-term policy-making (although the jury is out on how long councils will value them as political documents as none have currently lasted beyond a transfer of political power) and b) provide symbolic value to the public by demonstrating a council's commitments to listening to residents on an important political issue.

Despite the increasingly common use of citizen assemblies, a number of problems have emerged that should be addressed.

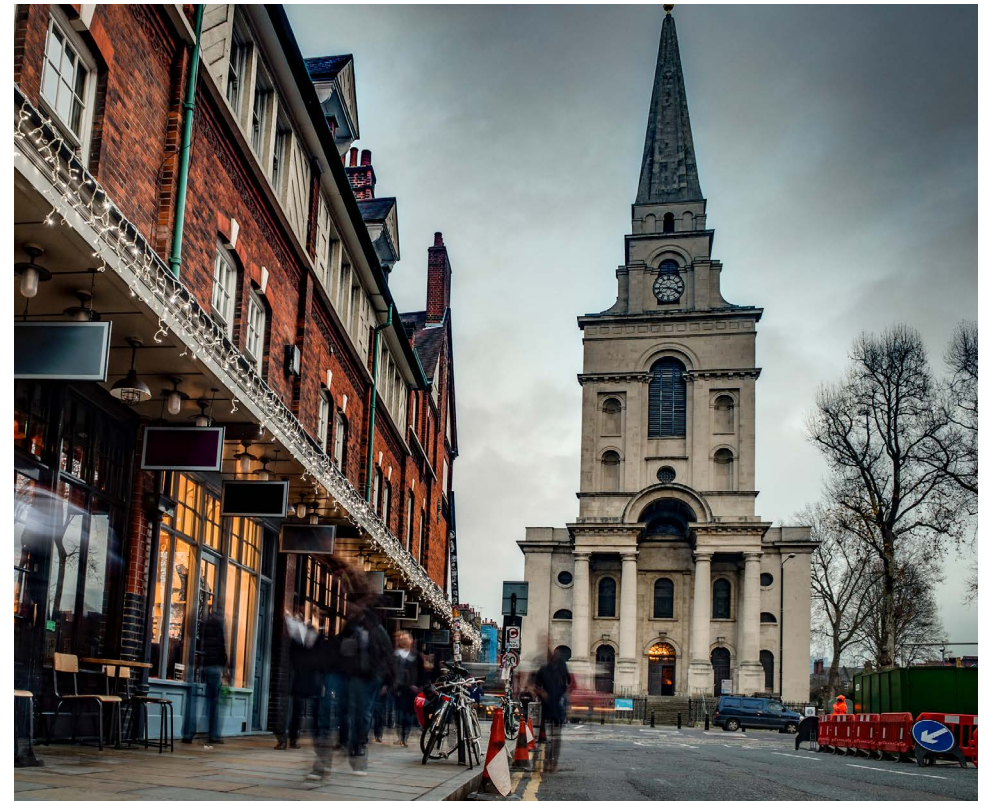
First, there is a consistent lack of learning from peers – councils are using almost identical processes as their peers, often generating the same learning as each other and navigating the same difficulties. Second, officers reported that citizen assemblies are not always chosen strategically (i.e. because they are the right tool for the job), but instead sometimes because they are in fashion or because senior leaders or politicians have heard of them. Third, there is a lack of evaluation of the quality of the outputs from citizen assemblies or their impacts on the borough as a whole.

## Participatory budgeting

Whilst participatory budgeting (PB) is not quite as popular as citizen assemblies, it is being used in a number of London boroughs. At the time of writing, LOTI estimates that around £5.75m is available across four boroughs running live PB programmes. The notable PB projects from across London include:

- Tower Hamlets ran the first modern participatory budgeting process in London in 2009-10 for a pot of money of over £5m.
- The YOU Decide programme in Brent allows residents to vote on £2.25m worth of money, divided equally between five neighbourhoods.
- Barking and Dagenham runs 'The Neighbourhood Fund', which lets residents vote on how the council's Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy is spent, with 74 projects worth over £650,000 now being supported.
- In Kensington and Chelsea, a £1.2m Grenfell Projects Fund has been established for residents from the North Kensington and Grenfell areas to propose and vote on ideas for themselves.

- Newham Council is in a second wave of participatory budgeting, through which £1.6m is distributed equally to eight neighbourhoods that can propose ideas and vote on how that money is spent.
- Camden Giving is a participatory grantmaking charity in Camden (not part of the council but supported by it) that has given out over £6m through multiple funds to which residents can apply.





### **Legislative theatre**

Haringey Council has used another method, called legislative theatre, which has similarly devolved decision-making power, to co-create its rough sleeping strategy.

Based on a similar initiative in Manchester, this project involved residents who had a lived experience of rough sleeping working with council officers to stage a play that illustrated what it was like to be a rough sleeper, including how they interact with public services.

Performed to council officers, elected councillors and the general public, this method entails participants making a direct pitch for what action they want the council to take when the audience is emotionally affected.

**One area where London lags behind some other cities is embedding these participatory methods in permanent governance arrangements.**

For example, Paris has a permanent citizen assembly that was created in 2021 and that is part of the city's constitution. It debates policy but also governs the city's participatory budgeting programme. And, in Ostbelgien (East Belgium), sortitioned residents make up half of the region's parliamentary committees. Despite the appetite of some London council officers to more permanently institutionalise participation, no boroughs have yet fully embraced this.

The only limited approach to creating an ongoing deliberative space comes through a small number of standing 'youth councils' like in Kensington & Chelsea, Barnet and Croydon. In these examples, a forum of young people is regularly convened (usually quarterly) by the council where young people can deliberate on topics and make proposals to the council. There is also the London Youth Assembly which is convened by the Mayor of London, where each borough sends two Assembly Members for the calendar year.

Therefore, if councils are eager to create institutional spaces for public deliberation, they might consider adapting the approaches done for youth participation listed here for participation efforts in other policy areas.

**loti** Recommendation

**Ahead of future citizen assembly projects, boroughs should ask themselves two questions to decide how they want to proceed:**

- Is there a less resource intensive and/or cheaper alternative that would provide the same or similar outcome (but without the hype)?
- Could we create a permanent forum for residents to deliberate on topics in an ongoing way, rather than for one-off projects?

### **Building on residents' collective intelligence**

These large-scale and formalised processes are not the only way of doing more meaningful, but still innovative, resident participation. There are many other creative and less resource-intensive ways through which the collective intelligence of residents can be captured – with the important caveat that their insights are acted upon.

The simplest way of capturing resident insights better is by improving how councils engage with residents through existing relationships or platforms. One easy way that multiple borough officers highlighted was the importance of engaging more effectively through local Facebook groups where residents already feel comfortable posting and sharing.

A great example of a council evolving an existing forum is Hammersmith & Fulham's Digital Accessibility Group. This is a panel of around 15 residents and 15 council officers who work together on digital accessibility and inclusion. The panel was originally created to work on web accessibility, but council officers realised that residents were so invested in the process of seeing their input affect council decisions that it bred an enthusiasm amongst the participants to contribute to other areas of work, such as digital inclusion.



**Alternatively, if a council wants to facilitate deliberation, they can find smaller-scale alternatives to citizen assemblies.**

For example, the innovation foundation Nesta has been piloting a method called Strategy Rooms (90-minute deliberative workshops on climate change policy), which can be replicated by any council. Through its pilot with 12 councils, including London councils such as Barnet, Nesta collected anonymised data on people's views from each Strategy Room that allowed for councils to compare the different perspectives of residents from different boroughs on a single platform.

Innovative councils are showing that there is no limit to the ways in which residents' 'collective intelligence' can be captured with a little creativity and a strong commitment to acting upon what residents tell you. The variety of methods available is well typified by Islington Council's Let's Talk Islington programme. As well as classic methods like surveys and workshops, Islington used other creative ways to encourage different communities to share their stories about inequality within the borough. This intelligence will be the bedrock for how the council will work differently with residents in order to address inequality within the borough until 2030.

Their methods included:

- **Participatory documentary making** where nine LGBTQ+ residents were trained in workshops to create documentaries telling their unique stories.
- **Storytelling for older people** who sat down with community officers over a tea or coffee and told stories from their lives.
- **Puppetry workshops** for young people with Special Educational Needs so they could express themselves in different ways.

**loti** Recommendation

**To complement traditional engagement methods like surveys or focus groups, boroughs should explore more creative, human and community-centred ways of letting residents tell their own stories.**

B.  
**Improving  
participation  
with technology**



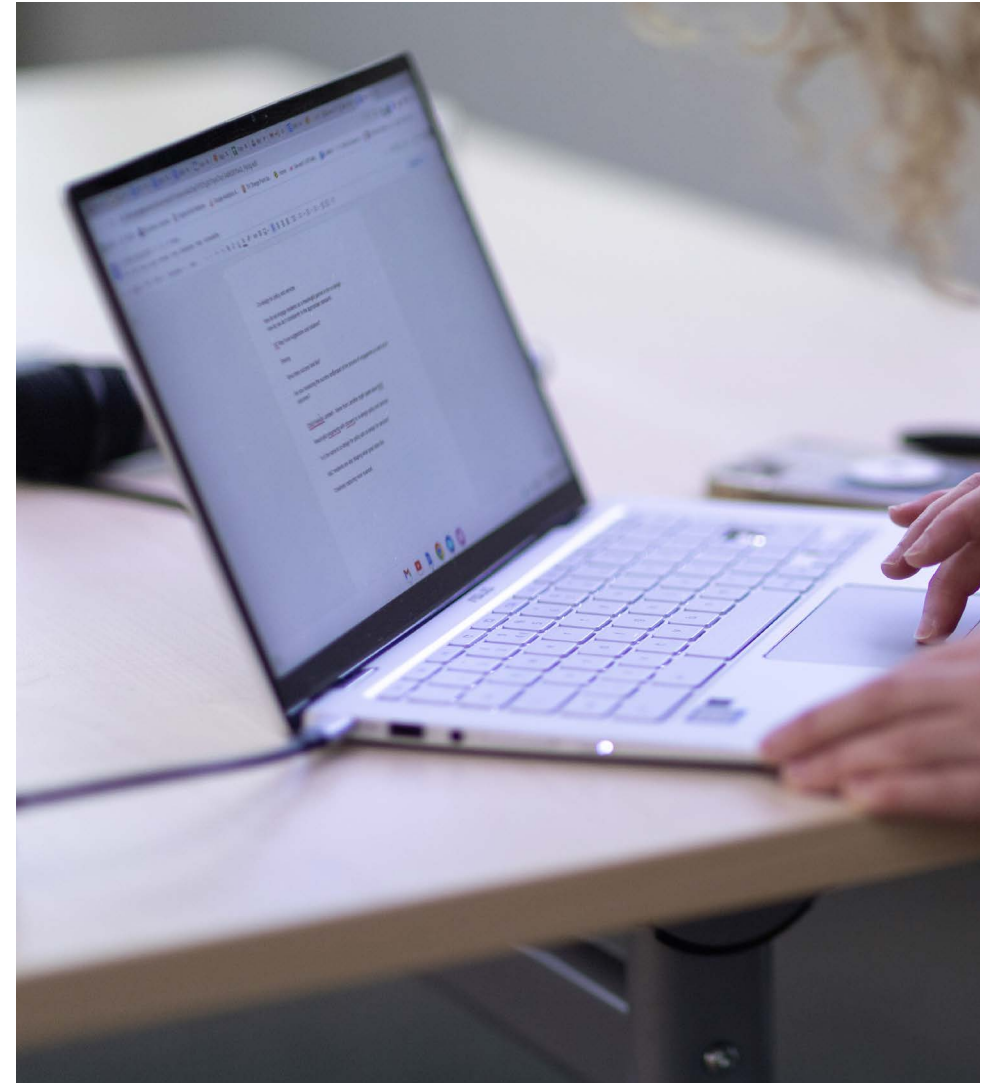


## **B. Improving participation with technology**

### **For most boroughs, technology in resident participation means streamlining the online survey process**

– i.e. moving it to a single platform (usually a microsite separate to the council website) that is managed by a small team of one or two officers.

There are many ways in which London boroughs can use these platforms better but there are also other creative uses of digital or online tools that can enable better participation.

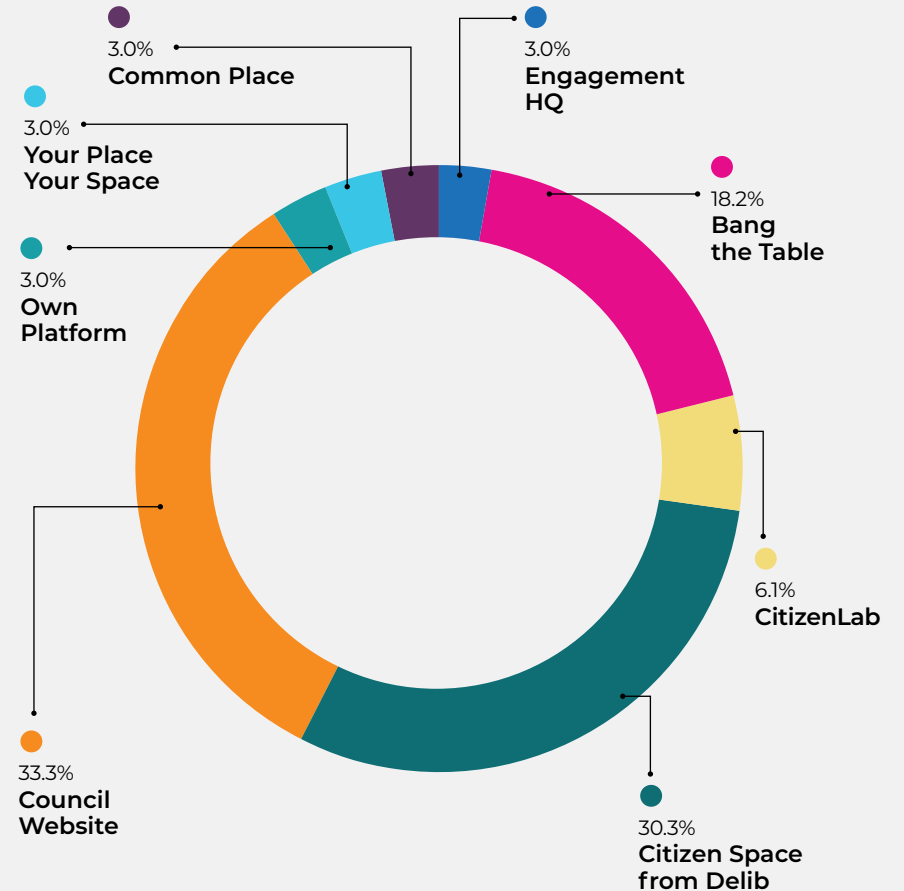


## Using resident engagement platforms better

For this report, we looked at the platforms that London councils were using at the time of writing in February 2023. 10 boroughs (30%) use Citizen Space from Delib and six (18%) use Bang the Table.

A third of boroughs do not have a resident engagement platform, choosing to host surveys on their own council website instead (this is not necessarily a bad thing, as it is cheaper and can be easier for residents to find). Otherwise, boroughs are using Common Place, Your Place Your Space, Engagement HQ, Citizen Lab and, in the case of the GLA, its own Talk London platform.

Online Engagement Platforms in London Boroughs



Link to raw data for better visualising:  
[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WtsTadrflmFttsLqc\\_PMEoKnHTV3S371hqt5tiUQ0y8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WtsTadrflmFttsLqc_PMEoKnHTV3S371hqt5tiUQ0y8/edit?usp=sharing)

**On a basic level, digital engagement channels enable councils to engage with larger numbers of residents with fewer resources.**

LOTI would encourage councils to consider what new opportunities come from using these platforms. For example, Ealing Council translated its online consultation for its Local Plan into the nine most commonly spoken languages in the borough and marketed it to underrepresented community groups. As a result, the consultation received 11,000 responses, many in the residents' own languages and from residents who might not have otherwise participated.

## **loti** Recommendation

**Boroughs should consider whether they can use cheap digital translation technologies to better engage with non native-English speakers, and which languages are appropriate to translate into.**



**Most councils are not getting the most out of the platforms they are using, however. In the majority of cases, the platforms simply run consultations and little else – but they can do so much more.**

In London, one borough using more of the features on its engagement platform is Barking and Dagenham and their One Borough Voice platform. It uses the Bang The Table' platform and has a 'My Neighbourhood' area with seven different Hubs for different neighbourhoods, which contain a variety of features, including:

- An interactive map with pins showing points of interest (e.g. where council projects are happening, sites with open consultations, sites of historical interest and local activities/things to do).
- Specific local information about new initiatives (e.g. a Library of Things).
- A forum where residents can comment on council projects (and other resident comments) and where council officers can respond.
- Hyper-local surveys and polls.
- Events and activities shared by both the council and the community, including volunteering opportunities.

Despite efforts from some boroughs like Barking and Dagenham, London as a whole falls behind other cities. Most famously, Madrid and Barcelona have invested heavily in creating online platforms that are now available as open-source platforms that other cities can use. In Madrid, some of the more innovative components in their 'Decide Madrid' platform that London boroughs might seek to borrow from, include:

- Residents directly propose policies to the City Government called Citizen Proposals. If 1% of residents vote on it, it goes directly to the city council to rule on feasibility and costs.
- Participatory budgeting is integrated into the platform but on a scale that dwarfs that of London – EUR 100m was allocated for residents to vote on.
- Online consultations and deliberations occur but, importantly, every process that can be done online can also be done offline in a council building so that digitally excluded residents also have a voice.

**The main reason for London falling behind is resourcing and support for the officers running these platforms.**

Councils in London sometimes have half a full-time officer who is responsible for their engagement platform and who manages every consultation through their system but they have had little training to use these platforms and little time to test their more advanced features. Less significant but still a factor, there is not any community of practice or much collaboration across boroughs to discuss how they can best use these platforms. When resources are spread thin across 33 administrative areas in one city, and sharing is piecemeal, it is no wonder that boroughs can't unlock the full features of their platforms.

For an alternate, collaborative approach, LOTI suggests that London councils look to Scotland. COSLA, the association of 33 local authorities in Scotland, created an online engagement platform built off the (free) open-source platform Consul. Each authority can use a localised version of the platform for free (or the price of membership of COSLA). Importantly, this central pooling of resources resulted in lower costs per authority than if they had all gone individually. And, as every authority is using the same platform, which is centrally supported by COSLA, it allows for a community of practice to build around it.



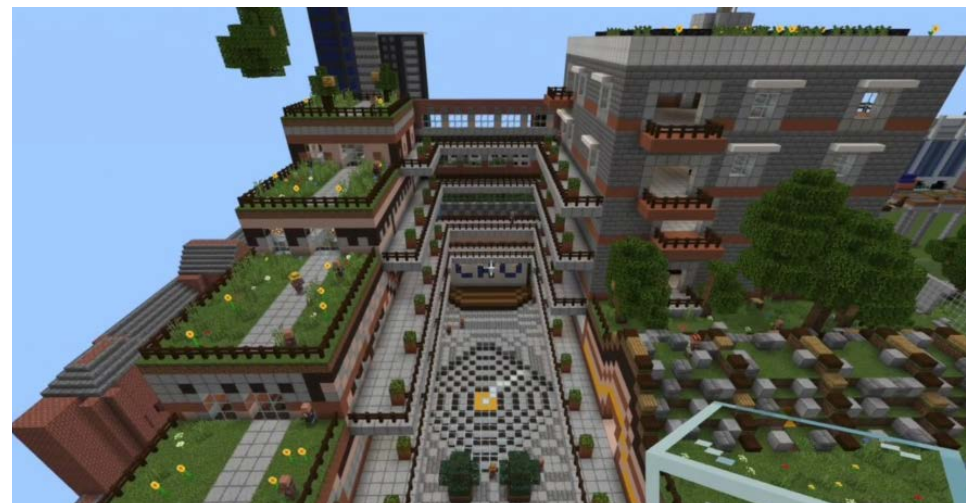
**loti** Recommendation

**When procuring online engagement platforms, boroughs should consider whether a collaborative approach to buying or developing a platform might be better.**

## Taking inspiration from innovative approaches to city planning

Digital tools increasingly offer opportunities for residents to creatively express how they want their city to look, in ways that answering a survey could never replicate.

For example, in 2021, the Greater London Authority set up Design Future London to encourage young people to creatively express how they want London to look. In its second iteration, the project began working with schoolchildren in Croydon in partnership with Minecraft Education and C40 Cities. Minecraft developers are building a version of London and Croydon, complete with interactive non-playable characters (NPCs), such as the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, so that young people can express themselves through the popular game of Minecraft.



Young people could physically rebuild Croydon town centre in Minecraft. [\(Link\)](#)



The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, was created as a non-playable character in Minecraft [\(link\)](#)

**Minecraft Education has also been used in UN Habitat projects, which has created a guide for using Minecraft for community participation.**

In fact, video games are not a completely new platform for local government to use – city planning games like Sim City and Cities: Skyline are known to have inspired urban planners due to their sandbox-style creativity for imagining cities, so it is unsurprising to see them used in participatory contexts. For example, in 2016, Stockholm, Sweden, partnered with the developers of the game Cities: Skylines to run workshops with residents that enabled them to customise detailed simulations of a new district in the city with 12,000 homes and 35,000 workspaces.

Another way in which better participation can improve urban design is by directly collecting insights from people in the physical spaces that are being designed. When innovators talk about ‘smart cities’, we normally think about collecting environmental (and passive) or physical data about people’s behaviour via sensors that have been put in and run by the local authority. Alternatively, London might instead try to reimagine and foster a smart city where people opt in and choose to share different types of insights, that they and the city as a whole can benefit from.

For example, Southwark Council is one of a number of boroughs using Hello Lamp Post, a London startup which puts physical QR codes and SMS prompts on publicly owned property like trees, bins and flagpoles, which members of the public can ‘have conversations’ with. They had 944 conversations with 714 people and the council used the insights to make better decisions around recycling, traffic, flooding and more. A number of other councils are using Hello Lamp Post – in Westminster, for example, the prompts within council buildings are being used to collect information about how people feel about their own offices.




A tree in Southwark that residents could ‘speak to’ about the climate emergency. [\(link\)](#)

## One last avenue that technology is opening up is citizen science.

More explicitly these involve the public creating datasets, which would be hard to generate by other means, which then can be used by the public or by local businesses or the council. Some initiatives from organisations across London (notably, not councils, but civil society groups) include:

- Colouring London is an initiative from The Alan Turing Institute in which members of the public ‘colour’ London - creating a public, open-source dataset that attempts to detail information about every single building in London (e.g. how they are used and how they change over time). This kind of initiative would help councils, businesses and residents to make more informed decisions about how they use the city.
- Citizen Sense collaborated with residents in 2016 and 2017 to develop a resident-led air-quality monitoring project in Deptford. Residents were spurred on by their concerns around air quality in relation to road transport and construction. Residents recorded air pollution data, as well as observations of environmental conditions and health effects, and could present them as ‘data stories’ which could then influence policy.
- A group of students in 2022 developed a project called WaterWays, which worked with artist collaboratives to create a “digital game for environmental data collection” called Canal Observatory.

As well as getting data on the canal itself, the idea was by letting residents log data, they become invested as stakeholders in the future of the canal.



**COLOURING LONDON**

Menu

Location	Land Use	Typology	Size
Construction	Age & History	Street Context	Team
Planning Controls	Energy Performance	Resilience	Community

Welcome to Colouring London!

Colouring London is a free knowledge exchange platform designed to provide over fifty types of open data on buildings in the city, to help make the city more sustainable.

Colouring London is also the prototype for the The Colouring Cities Research Programme (CCRP), led by the Alan Turing Institute. It involves an [international consortium of academic institutions](#) involved in building research. Our aim is to maximise accessibility to building-level data across countries, to help improve stock quality, efficiency, sustainability and resilience and meet net-zero goals.

New data and features are added all the time. We are keen to engage as many people as possible in platform development. Whether you are a resident, or a stakeholder in academia, government, industry or the third sector, any help you can give colouring in our

## loti Recommendation

**Interested boroughs should explore creating a citizen science programme that ties sustained citizen science projects to long-term policy goals.**



C.  
**Addressing  
organisational  
barriers to  
participation**



## **C. Addressing organisational barriers to participation**

**To start taking full advantage of some of the new resident participation methods available to officers, councils need to develop their own organisational capacity and will to engage residents effectively.**

This is far more difficult than running a single, interesting and innovative project, however.

### **Defining roles and responsibilities**

One of the first things to consider is who works on resident participation and engagement in boroughs. Whilst it is not the same in every borough, here are five types of officer who typically take on this duty:

- **Resident engagement or participation officers.**  
Teams of engagement officers existed in all but one of the boroughs interviewed (although the borough in question is currently establishing a team). These officers usually sit in a central corporate team that manages core consultations and surveys.
- **Engagement officers in particular service areas.**  
Some service areas (in particular, areas like planning, transport or housing where there are statutory obligations) employ engagement officers to engage residents in defined ways.



- **Community officers.**

These roles sometimes sit outside the engagement teams and are the officers who 'do' the face-to-face engagement with the public and hold the relationships with communities.

- **Central strategy or policy teams.**

In boroughs where there is a political or strategic focus on engagement, participation or co-design, central strategy, policy or design teams exist and often write key policy documents and run large strategic projects, such as citizen assemblies.

- **User researchers and service designers.**

These officers engage with residents from a service or policy design perspective rather than wearing a community engagement hat.

The responsibilities for, and activities used to engage residents, are spread thin and are varied even within boroughs. Some boroughs have strategies or policies to help align practice but two boroughs that took part in our research and that had strategies revealed that, in effect, no one uses them. It suggests that the most important first steps for improving participation may not be a governance or policy step but building the foundational culture and skills across the organisation so that new policies can have the uptake they need to be effective.

One of the most common problems that resulted from this disjointed practice was officers from a given service approaching the engagement team with an idea for a survey or engagement project at unfeasibly short notice and that is unresourced or poorly designed or worded.

In terms of capacity, every single officer interviewed indicated that 'resources' was a significant hurdle to them achieving their ambitions.



## Creating better conditions for participation

Starting to create better organisational conditions for doing participation requires a few things.

First is better resourcing. Although this is difficult for officers to change in practice (the levels of resourcing are often connected to senior buy-in for the importance of public engagement and participation), this report has described opportunities for collaboration that could help with this.

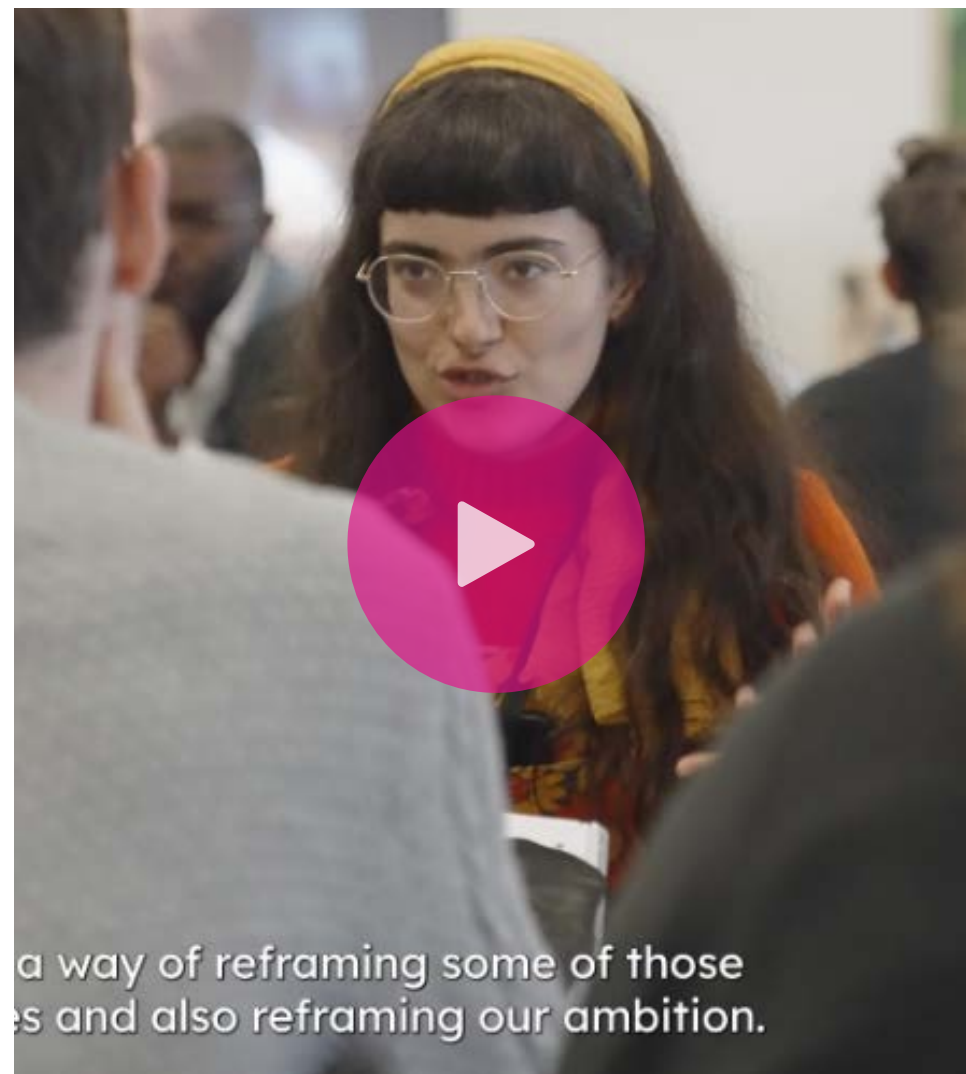
Second is the political investment and interest of senior leaders – generally speaking, the councils that are better at resident engagement are the ones whose leaders embrace its value more. Leaders can ensure engagement is well resourced, they can communicate a powerful story about it to residents and they can give the space for officers to try ambitious projects to achieve their desired outcomes.

However, as one officer put it, “We can’t just wait for every borough to have a [Leader’s Name]”. So, one of the challenges for some borough officers is bringing their leaders on the journey of developing more innovative resident participation approaches.

**Third is the culture shift required to unlock participation in boroughs consistently and successfully across dozens of different services.**

One common approach to address this is through internal practitioner networks. Kensington and Chelsea demonstrates just what is possible through its Community Engagement Network. It brings together over 50 staff to discuss a topic, often with a speaker from the network or externally. On top of this, the council has a Celebrating Co-Production project, which supports 15 services across the council by funding pilots in each area to do engagement better with lessons shared internally between teams.

Councils might also explore training opportunities to bring out the creative ambition of residents to solve problems together. Camden Council's 'Camden Imagines' training addresses this, taking a 'diagonal slice' of officers from across levels and service areas (including the Leader herself) and using hands-on facilitated workshops to encourage people to imagine new and different ways of working. At its core is the belief that everyone has ideas to make their place better, including and especially those who are not typically considered decision-makers or idea-creators, whether they be frontline staff or non-experts from historically disadvantaged communities of residents.



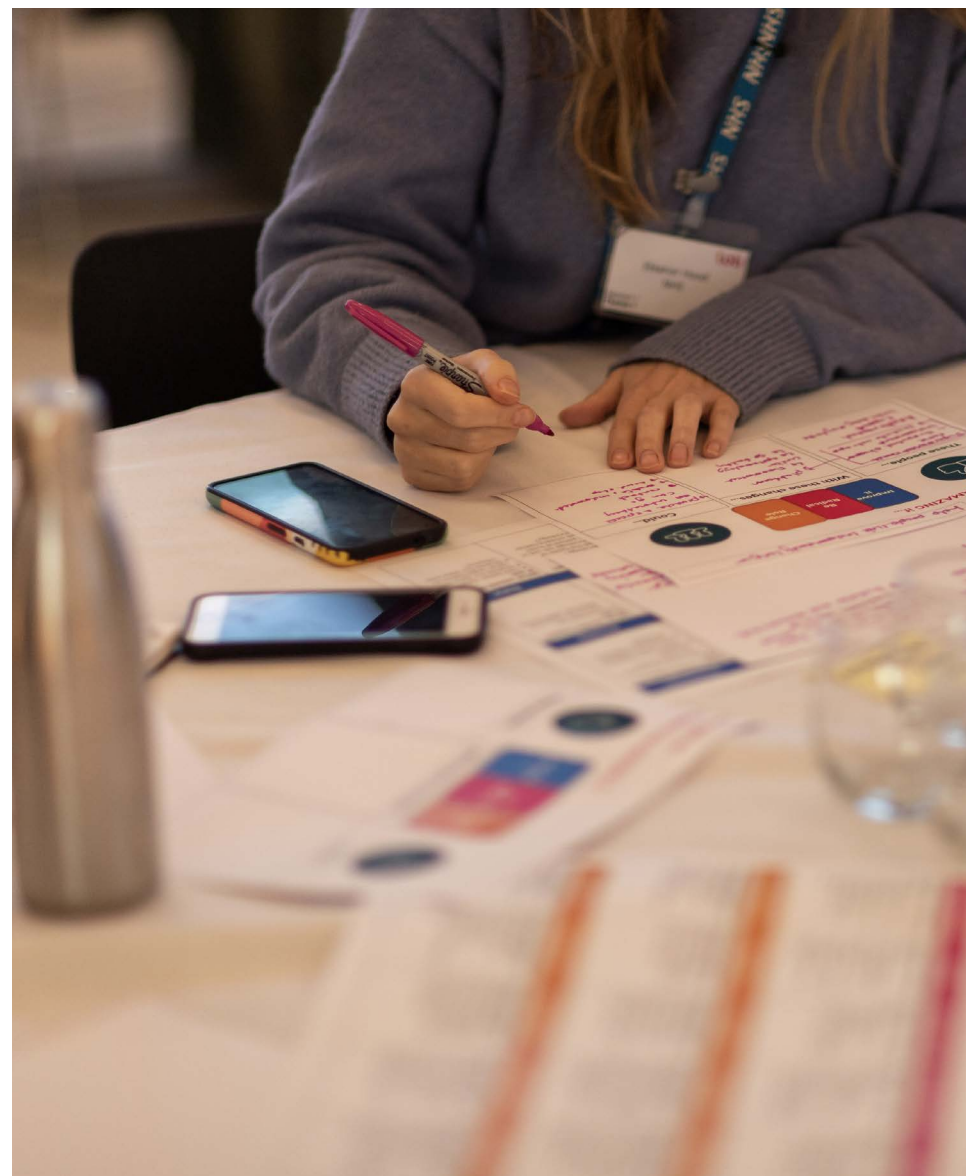
A still from the Camden Imagines video ([link](#)) describing how the training helped council officers reframe issues and their ambition.

## loti Recommendation

**Boroughs should explore new, innovative training programmes that address the cultural and skills barriers to doing participation better.**

Lastly, there is an absence of collaboration between boroughs, which needs to be improved. LOTI recognises the need for a more organised community of practice that can consistently ask questions, share lessons and find common solutions to problems.

But councils also need to find ways to collaborate better on resident engagement projects, where it makes greater sense to run as multiple boroughs than a single borough. For example, following the murder of Sarah Everard in 2021 by a Metropolitan Police officer, some councils ran mapping projects where women could place on a map where they felt unsafe, like in Barking and Dagenham.





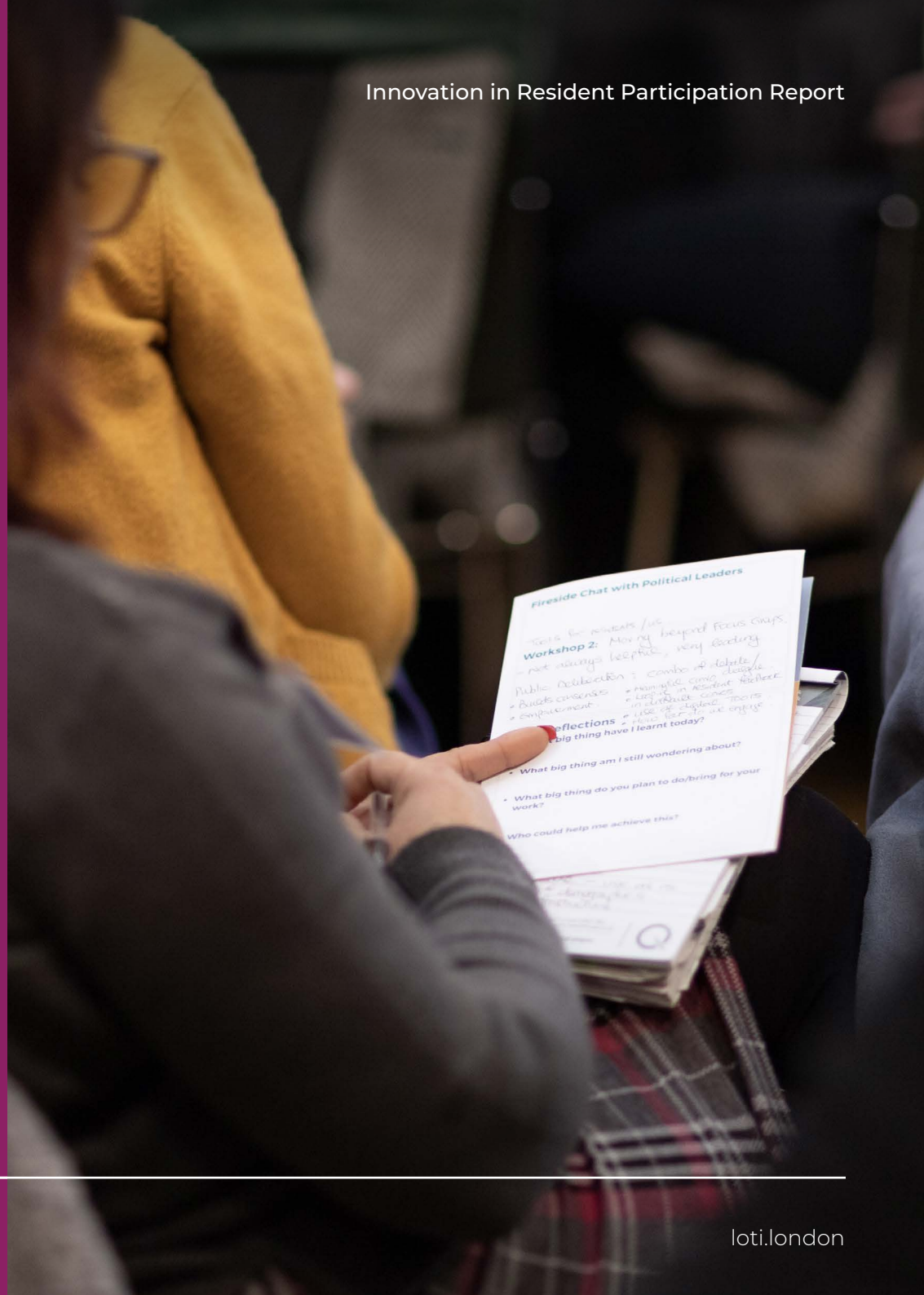
However, this approach might have been improved if councils collectively had one shared platform to map these things, that they could each share and which residents could easily add to. Most residents live across multiple boroughs, so it makes sense to reflect that by letting the comment on where they feel unsafe wherever it is in London. Therefore, borough officers need to develop the connections, confidence and tools to collaborate with other boroughs.

### loti Recommendation

**At the design stage of a project, boroughs should consider if the subject of engagement is relevant to neighbouring boroughs and if so, explore the possibility of running a collaborative engagement.**

In this spirit, the GLA and London Councils launched a fund in 2023 supporting 13 boroughs to test new engagement methods or reach out to lesser heard members of the community in their borough. This project running to March 2024 has been complemented by a learning partnership with Neighbourly Lab, who ran periodical webinars and writing an accompanying report, all with the goal of collective learning and sharing. LOTI recommends that London Councils, the GLA and individual boroughs continue with this collaborative approach where possible.

# Recommendations





1. Ahead of future citizen assembly projects, boroughs should ask themselves two questions to decide how they want to proceed:
  - a. Is there a less resource intensive and/or cheaper alternative that would provide the same or similar outcome (but without the hype)?
  - b. Could we create a permanent forum for residents to deliberate on topics in an ongoing way, rather than for one-off projects?
2. To complement traditional engagement methods like surveys or focus groups, boroughs should explore more creative community-centred ways of letting residents tell their own stories.
3. Boroughs should consider whether they can use cheap digital translation technologies to better engage with non native-English speakers, and which languages are appropriate to translate into.
4. When procuring online engagement platforms, boroughs should consider whether a collaborative approach to buying or developing a platform might be better.
5. Interested boroughs should explore creating a citizen science programme that ties sustained citizen science projects to long-term policy goals.
6. Boroughs should explore new, innovative training programmes that address the cultural and skills barriers to doing participation better.
7. At the design stage of a project, boroughs should consider if the subject of engagement is relevant to neighbouring boroughs and if so, explore the possibility of running collaborative engagement.

## Useful resources





If you want help designing a resident participation project, use...

### **Nesta's Collective Intelligence Design Playbook (2019)**

For any teams that know they want to design a participatory process but are not sure how to go about choosing the right online or offline tools to use, LOTI recommends Nesta's Collective Intelligence Design Playbook. It contains three tools to help teams: the Design Canvas is a template that teams can fill to help them design their project; the Prompt Cards contain examples from around the world of dozens of examples of different methods to help inspire teams; and the Design Activities help deepen or stretch your thinking around particular collective intelligence design questions.



If you want help creating your in-person deliberative process, use...

### **The OECD's Deliberative Democracy Toolbox (2020-2022)**

The OECD has published a Deliberative Democracy Toolbox comprising of four resources that can help councils design deliberative participatory processes: the seminal 'Catching the Deliberative Wave' report details hundreds of case studies from around the world; the Good Practice Principles help guide any processes to ensure that its meaningful and well run; the Evaluation Guidelines provide a minimum standard for evaluation to enable better learning, sharing and improving; and the guide on Institutionalising Deliberative Democracy offers practical advice on how to create permanent participatory mechanisms in public institutions.



If you want help choosing the right digital participation platform, use...

### **People Powered's Digital Participation Platforms Resource Centre (2022)**

To help authorities evaluate the pros and cons of the different digital participation platforms that have emerged, People Powered created a Resource Centre that contains a range of guidance. An international panel of independent experts rated over 50 different platforms, and then wrote a Guide for When to Use Them, How to Choose, and Tips for Maximum Results. This is the best guide to help you pick your platform.



## About LOTI

The London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) was established in July 2019 to help its members (currently 27 London boroughs, the Greater London Authority (GLA), and London Councils) to collaborate on projects that bring the best of digital and data innovation to improve public services and outcomes for Londoners.

**Read more at: [loti.london](https://loti.london)**