

# e-Democracy Survey 2005

Local authorities experiences of democracy on and off line





The Local e-Democracy National Project has been set up with £4m of funding from the ODPM to help Local Authorities exploit the potential of new technologies for democratic renewal. The project is one of 22 National Projects, funded with £80m from the ODPM, which aim to bring together councils, central government, the private sector and others to define and deliver projects and national Local e-Government solutions.

**[www.e-democracy.gov.uk](http://www.e-democracy.gov.uk)**

# Foreword

Everyone agrees that democracy is important but when it comes to defining it and determining whether or not democracy is effective, there is far greater scope for debate.

Bristol City Council is leading the evaluation workstream of the Local e-Democracy National Project. This is a challenging responsibility and the council has appointed three leading academic experts to work together for the first time as an Expert Evaluation Group.

Professors Stephen Coleman of the Oxford Internet Institute, Ann Macintosh of Napier University's International Teledemocracy Centre and Mansur Lalljee from the Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford bring very different perspectives to the study of e-Democracy. All are valuable when trying to reach conclusions about what works.



The e-Democracy Evaluation Expert Group: Professor Stephen Coleman, Professor Ann Macintosh and Dr Mansur Lalljee. Pictured with Nick Gurney, Chief Executive, Bristol City Council.

This survey explores how and why some English Local Authorities are introducing e-Democracy. Whilst the survey is the first step in the National Project evaluation process, the Expert Group remind us that the real starting point for all thinking about e-Democracy is the empowerment of the citizen;

“We do not regard democracy as merely an institutional activity, concerned with making it easier to govern people in more modern ways. E-Democracy effects (and affects) the experiences and opportunities of citizens, including those who are not ‘political’ and tend not to be heard in the usual processes of policy formation and decision-making. So, much of what we need to know about the value of e-Democracy involves measuring the impact of various technologies and methods upon people who might not see themselves as political actors.

Our aim as an Expert Evaluation Group will be to build on the findings of the survey. Indeed, a key outcome of the Local e-Democracy National Project will be an authoritative and accessible volume of research findings that will address some of the key questions that cannot be answered by the findings of this survey alone”.

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RECIEVING  
SIGNAL AIR

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# Introduction

## Overall

This report presents the findings of a survey of English local authorities conducted by the MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the local e-Democracy National Project.

The survey of English local authorities aims to establish the following:

- Produce an initial benchmark survey of English local authorities on current and planned local e-Democracy practice, reflecting the full range of English authorities in terms of structure, location, urban and rural as well as including early adopters of e-Democracy and those who have been slower to start.
- Include questions on local authorities' perceptions of their own activity, the use of the internet for citizen input to policy consultation and debate and citizen feedback via the internet on service delivery issues.

## Methodology

Results are based on 178 questionnaires completed online with Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English local authorities. Emails were sent to all 388 English local authorities with only one reply allowed per authority. This sample was provided by the Local e-Democracy National Project. The response rate is 46%. Respondents were given the opportunity to complete the survey online themselves, or to go through the survey with a telephone interviewer. Fieldwork was conducted between 7 September and 7 October 2004.

## Interpretation of the Data

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of 388 English local authorities has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. The table below gives details on the statistical reliability of responses within a finite population of 388 local authorities.

Actual sample size	SURVEY RESULT		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
178	+3	+5	+5
150	+4	+6	+6
100	+5	+8	+9
50	+8	+12	+13
25	+12	+18	+19

The table above shows that the level of confidence in the variation between sample results and 'true' values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had completed the questionnaire). For example, if 50% of English local authorities were to give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the "true" value will fall within the range of 5 percentage points from the sample results.

Unless otherwise stated, results are based on all respondents. Please note that no sub-group findings for any group of less than 10 respondents are shown, following Market Research Society guidelines. In the report where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers. Data are unweighted.

## Other Data Sources

Within the report reference is made to two other data sources, which enable the analysis of different types of local authority:

**Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA):** This data is provided by the Audit Commission, who produces CPA scores based on assessments of how well local councils are performing. CPA scores include assessments of how well the council is run in general, and how this might impact on future service delivery, rather than specific assessments of how e-government is delivered. The CPA scores are in ascending order: “poor”, “weak”, “fair”, “good” and “excellent”. Please note that not all two-tier District or Borough Councils have yet been given a CPA ranking. Further details can be found at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa>, and in the appendices where the profile of the survey responses is compared to the profile of CPA authorities across England. The data used in this analysis was up-to-date at the end of October 2004.

**SOCITM assessments of Council Websites:** The Society of IT Management (SOCITM) produces an annual report Better Connected that independently assesses all council websites. Sites are assessed on the basis of the functionality and performance of the site, no other information is taken into account. The SOCITM assessments are in ascending order; “promotional”, “content”, “content plus”, and “transactional”. Further details can be found at <http://www.socitm.gov.uk/Public/insight/publications/Better+Connected+2004.htm> In the appendices the profile of the survey responses is compared to the profile of SOCITM scores across England.

## Acknowledgments

MORI would like to thank Stephen Hilton, Evaluation Lead and Consultation Manager and Kevin O’Malley, Project Manger of Bristol City Council for their help and support in conducting this study. We would also like to thank all of the Consultation Leads and e-Champions who took part in the survey.

Bristol City Council would like to thank Councillor Mary Reid the National Project Chair, Nick Richmond-Smith Project Manager Surrey County Council, and Ian Johnson Assistant Director e-Democracy at the Cabinet Office.

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# Summary of findings

Most councils view engaging local residents as one of their corporate priorities (77%) and most have a written strategy in place (76%). This has yet to translate into a similar level of support for e-Democracy, with only one in five (19%) authorities so far having a written e-Democracy strategy. A further third (36%) do have plans to draw a strategy up, suggesting that we are still in the process of e-Democracy being implemented by local authorities.

The key barriers to implementing e-Democracy are seen to be a lack of budget available (59%), followed by a perceived lack of public interest (39%). There is a link between the level of e-Democracy and whether the authority has a strategy in place or a committee or group responsible for e-Democracy. Those with a written strategy are more likely to have the budget in place and to have officers actively involved in e-Democracy. It should be noted that causality may be the other way, with those with a budget and active officers more likely to have a committee or group responsible for e-Democracy.

There is a gap between what is available offline and what is available online. This presents apparent easy wins, for example putting council newspapers and magazines online. Councils perhaps do not have to do anything radically new, but perhaps systematically ensure that their current participation/engagement activities are made available online, in order to help promote e-Democracy. Many of the current activities are one-way data collection, for example comments, compliments and queries, rather than two-way interactions, for example online surgeries. There are examples of authorities who have used these two-way interactions, and hopefully the National Project can help promote these methods further.

There is evidence that some authorities perceive specific strategies for engaging

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residents as not a priority. One in five (21%) of authorities do not have engaging local residents as a corporate priority, with two-thirds (66%) of this group saying that members and officers see e-Democracy as another initiative they have to implement. This is a barrier that the National Project needs to overcome.

When comparing authorities with different CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessments) scores there are marked differences in terms of how they engage with residents. “Good” or “excellent” CPA authorities are more likely to communicate decisions through their council newspaper or magazine (96% vs. 83% of other authorities) and rate communications and informing local residents about council decisions as effective (95% vs. 83%). In terms of e-Democracy higher rated CPA authorities are more likely to use webcasts (14% vs. 4%), online scrutiny/select committees (13% vs. 3%), online councillor surgeries (10% vs. 1%), offer an e-bulletin (28% vs. 13%) and encourage residents to engage with e-Democracy through either email enquiries (40% vs. 27%), local media (36% vs. 24%), and other stakeholders (29% vs. 15%). “Fair”, “weak” and “poor” authorities are more likely to see lack of budget (68% vs. 54%) and lack of leadership (25% vs. 8%) as barriers.

When comparing authorities with different SOCITM ratings of their website, there are differences in terms of how involved residents and officers are with new technology, as well as with associated publicity. Higher rated (“content plus”/“transactional”) authorities are more likely to involve residents in website testing (37% vs. 20%); perhaps suggesting that this is a key part of ensuring a website is usable. These authorities are also more likely to promote e-Democracy through a range of activities, such as libraries (40% vs. 18%), poster campaigns (34% vs. 9%), and radio/television interviews (21% vs. 9%). They are more likely

to put minutes/agendas of council meetings online (91% vs. 73%), and to have a budget for e-Democracy (43% vs. 27%). There is also perceived to be a general enthusiasm amongst members and officers to embrace e-Democracy (47% vs. 27%), and a view that transparency of council activity has increased through e-Democracy (57% vs. 34%).

Overall, there are encouraging moves towards written strategies and increased e-Democracy activity. The key challenge for the e-Democracy National Project will be to ensure that the quality of e-Democracy is high, and that take-up and participation is maximised.

# 8

## 1 How councils engage local residents offline

In the first section of the survey respondents were told that their responses could be used to identify their authority to establish the relative levels of e-Democracy. Later in the survey attitudinal questions requiring personal responses were asked confidentially.

### 1.1 Current engagement

Nearly all authorities (93%) engage with residents through using comments, complaints and compliments. Around three-quarters provide open public meetings (78%), scrutiny/select committees (77%), citizens'/residents' panels (75%), councillor surgeries (71%), and focus groups (71%). This pattern is consistent across authority types. The only significant difference is that only 17% of District/Borough Councils involved residents in mystery shopping/service testing, compared to 36% among County Councils and 44% in single-tier areas. Also councils in urban areas are more likely to hold councillor surgeries (81%) than councils in rural areas (58%).

### Methods of engagement with local residents

Q We are interested in how your local authority engages local residents. In the last 12 months has your local authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through the following?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## 1.2 Current communication of decisions

All respondent councils issue press releases of their decisions (100%) and most publish minutes of meetings (92%), and/or produce a council paper or magazine (90%). Face to face briefings (38%) and other means of communicating decisions (19%) are less common. Of the other methods the most common are to use the website, and there is also mention of community workshops and area forums, or individual services producing letters. The findings are consistent across authority types, although face-to-face briefings are far less likely to occur in two-tier District/Borough Council areas (29%) than in single tier areas (52%) or at the County Council level (64%). This might be a reflection of a difference by rurality (95% of rural areas are two-tier District/Borough Council areas), as only 28% of authorities in rural areas use face-to-face briefings, compared to 43% in urban areas.

There is a difference between local authorities who have achieved varying CPA scores<sup>2</sup>, with those authorities rated as “good” or “excellent” more likely (96%) to communicate decisions through a council newspaper or magazine than those rated “weak”, “poor” or “fair” (83%). This ties in with the findings of MORI and the IDeA on the importance of communications and CPA scores in the report *Connecting With Communities: Improving Communications in Local Government*<sup>3</sup>.

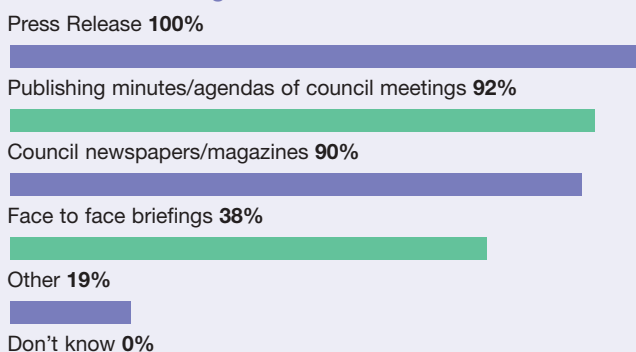
## 1.3 Written strategies and responsibilities

Three-quarters of English authorities (76%) have a written strategy in place for engaging local residents, and 77% state that engaging local residents is one of their authority’s corporate priorities. This is consistent across all authority types.

Responsibility for engagement with local residents is most commonly shared between different officers and members, rather than being the responsibility of an individual, as highlighted in the chart below.

### Communication of Decisions

Q How does your local authority go about communicating divisions?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

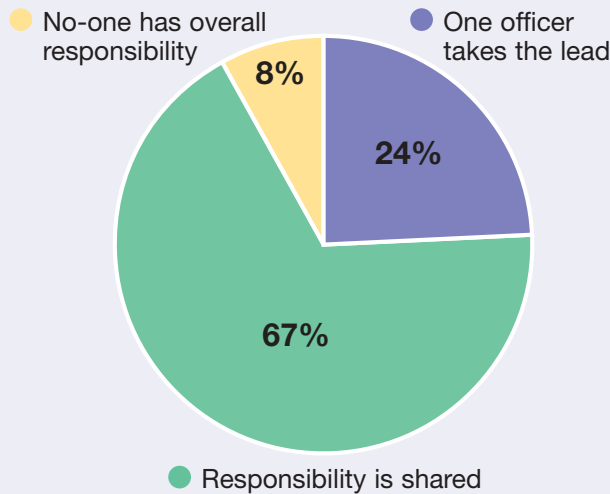
<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) provided by the Audit Commission, see introduction for further details.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.mori.com/localgov/cwc.php](http://www.mori.com/localgov/cwc.php) and [www.idea.gov.uk/communications](http://www.idea.gov.uk/communications) for further details.

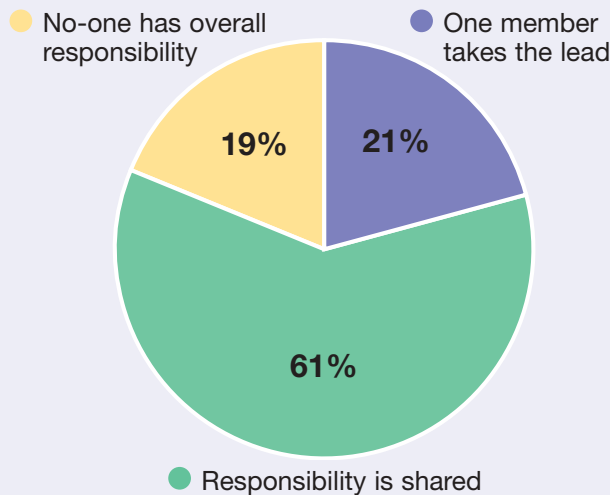
## Responsibility for engaging local residents

- Q** Is there a single officer who takes the overall responsibility amongst your local councillors in engaging local residents, or is the responsibility shared across different officers?
- Q** Is there a single member who takes the overall responsibility amongst your members in engaging local residents, or is the responsibility shared across different members?

### OFFICER



### MEMBER



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

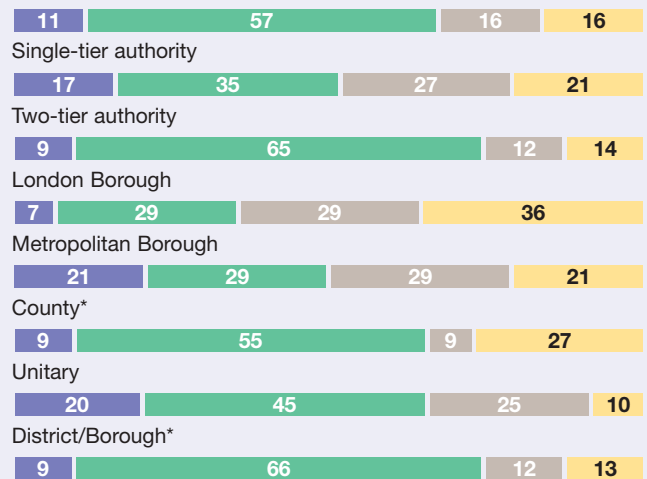
A minority of authorities have a group or committee that has overall responsibility for engaging local residents. One in six (16%) authorities has a multiagency group, the same proportion who have a group or committee within their council only (16%). There is a difference by authority type, with London (65%) and Metropolitan (50%) Borough Councils more likely to have a group or committee.

## Group or committee responsible for engaging local residents

- Q** Does your authority have a group or committee that has overall responsibility for engaging local residents?

- % Don't know
- % No
- % Yes, within this council only
- % Yes, a multiagency group

### Overall



\*Two-tier authority

Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## 1.4 Attitudes on the effectiveness of engaging residents

The majority of respondents think that their council is effective at *communicating* with, and informing residents about council decisions (87%). A smaller majority (76%) state that their council is effective in *consulting* local residents about a range of predetermined options. Opinion about the extent to which councils effectively *engage* residents in their decisions is more divided. Half (55%) of respondents think that their council is effective in engaging residents in making decisions, but this is nearly as many (41%) as those who think that their council is not effective<sup>4</sup>.

### Effectiveness of councils' communication, consultation and engagement strategies

Q Generally speaking, how effective do you think your council is at each of the following?

- % Not at all effective
- % Not very effective
- % Fairly effective
- % Very effective

Net +/-

Communicating/informing local residents about council decisions



Consulting local residents about a number of predetermined options



Engaging local residents in making a council decision



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

There is a difference between authority types when looking at engaging local residents in making a council decision. This is likely to be rated as effective much more by single-tier (67%) than by two-tier authorities (50%).

There is also a difference between those with a weak, fair or poor CPA rating and those with a good or excellent one. Those with a higher CPA rating are far more likely to state that their council is effective in engaging with residents.

Q Generally speaking, how effective do you think your council is at each of the following?

	Overall	Weak/ Fair/Poor CPA	Good/ Excellent CPA
Base: Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004	Net Effective +/- (178)	Net Effective +/- (75)	Net Effective +/- (78)
Communicating/informing local residents about council decisions	+76	+67	+91
Consulting local residents about a number of predetermined options	+56	+38	+69
Engaging local residents in making a council decision	+14	-2	+30

Source: MORI

<sup>4</sup> Net scores (+/-) are reached by subtracting the proportion who rate the aspect as not effective from the proportion who rate the aspect as effective. This gives a balance of opinion for analysis. "Don't Know" responses are not included in the chart.



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## 2 How Councils implement e-Democracy

### 2.1 Current e-Democracy activity

Reflecting the pattern of engagement generally, the most common use of e-Democracy is via an online comments, compliments and complaints scheme – though the proportion of authorities which offer this service online (72%) is significantly smaller than the total number who offer it offline (93%). Around half (47%) of authorities carry out online surveys of local residents, a quarter (27%) involve residents in website testing, and one in ten (11%) offer online citizens and residents panels. Other forms of online engagement are, however, less common, and it is notable that 10% of authorities do not engage residents through any of these forms of e-Democracy.

#### Methods for engaging with local residents

**Q** How does your local authority go about engaging local residents through e-democracy? In the last 12 months has your authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through any of the following?

Online comments/compliments/complaints scheme **72%**

Online survey of local residents **47%**

Involving residents in website testing **27%**

Online citizens/residents panel **11%**

Webcast council meetings **9%**

Online petitions **7%**

Online scrutiny/select committees **7%**

Online planning for real/visioning exercises **6%**

Online focus groups **6%**

Online councillors surgeries **6%**

Online local area/neighbourhood forums **5%**

Web logs **4%**

Online citizens jury **1%**

Other **12%**

None of the above **10%**

Don't know **3%**

Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

Those who have a written strategy on e-Democracy are far more likely (91%) than those without (68%) to have an online comments, compliments and complaints scheme. This might suggest an easy win for any written strategy. Those who have a “good” or “excellent” CPA rating are more likely to use webcasts of council meetings (14% vs. 4% of other authorities), online scrutiny and select committees (13% vs. 3%) and online councillor surgeries (10% vs. 1%).

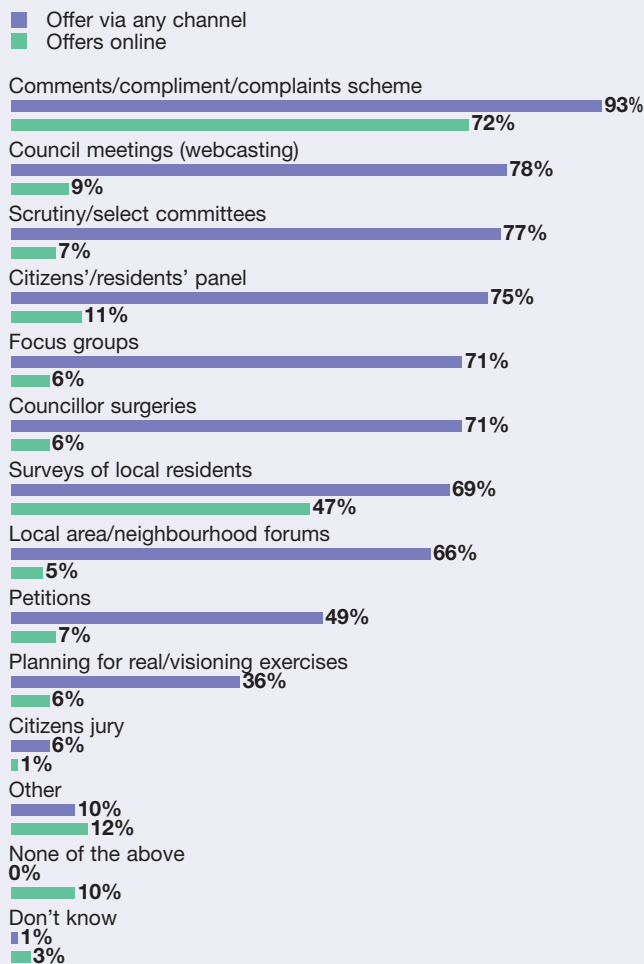
Those authorities whose website has a higher SOCITM rating of “content plus” or “transactional” are more likely (37%) to have involved residents in website testing than those who have a lower rating (20%). This reinforces the importance of testing websites with residents to ensure that the site meets their needs, and shows that the lessons learnt may improve the quality of the website. Two-tier District/Borough Councils (19%) are far less likely to involve residents in website testing, than County Councils (45%) or single-tier authorities (42%).

When comparing between offline and online activity, comment, compliments and complaints stands out as consistently provided across the two mediums. There is also a high degree of use of online and offline surveys (although there will be differences in methodology and quality). These two activities are means by which authorities can collect comments from residents. Activities that are offered offline, but are far less likely to be offered online, such as local area or neighbourhood groups, are those which promote a two-way dialogue between residents and their council. The large gaps between the number of councils offering a service offline and offering the same service through online channels is marked, and highlights the need for local authorities to put current activity online and create more of a two-way use of e-Democracy.

## Engaging with local residents

**Q** We are interested in how your local authority engages local residents. In the last 12 months has your authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through any of the following?

**Q** We are interested in how your local authority engages local residents through e-Democracy. In the last 12 months has your authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through any of the following?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## Activities Council conducts to encourage e-Democracy engagement

**Q** Which of the following activities does your council conduct to encourage residents to engage in e-Democracy?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

The most common marketing activity councils use to encourage residents to engage in e-Democracy is the promotion of such services by frontline staff (48%). Other popular choices are publishing council-based literature, and 'themed' weeks.

Those with a group or committee responsible for e-Democracy are more likely to use frontline staff to promote e-Democracy opportunities to the public (63% vs. 37% of those who do not have a group/committee), council paper-based literature (59% vs. 38%), via email enquiries (43% vs. 23%) or promotions in libraries (35% vs. 20%). “Excellent” or “good” CPA rated authorities are more likely than other authorities to encourage residents through email enquiries (40% vs. 27%), the local media (36% vs. 24%) or co-operation with other stakeholders in e-Democracy (29% vs. 15%). Of those who have a higher SOCITM rating, there is greater likelihood of promotions of e-Democracy in libraries (40% vs. 18%), poster campaigns (34% vs. 9%), radio/television interviews (21% vs. 9%), training for the public (16% vs. 6%), specific campaigns for e-Democracy (11% vs. 3%) and SMS text messaging (11% vs. 1%).

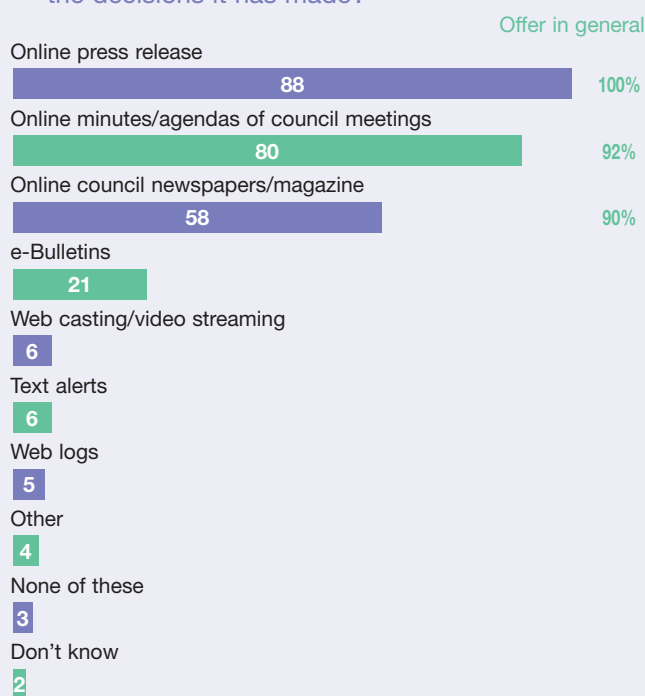
Two-tier District/Borough Councils are not responsible for the provision of libraries in their area, this service is the responsibility of the County Council. This is reflected in the findings, as only one in seven (15%) District/Borough Councils encourage residents through libraries, compared to a third of Counties (36%) and over half of single-tier authorities (52%). There are also significant differences in the use of themed weeks. They are used extensively by County Councils (82%), and to a lesser degree by two-tier District/Borough Councils (45%) and Unitary authorities (40%). They are least used by London Boroughs (29%) and Metropolitan Borough Councils (14%).

## 2.2 Current use of e-Democracy to communicate decisions

Online press releases, and online minutes and agendas are the most common forms of online communication used by authorities (88% and 80% respectively). Around three in five (58%) produce online council newspapers or magazines, and 21% produce e-bulletins. As with engaging local residents, the gap between what is already offered offline and what is offered online should present relatively easy wins to increase e-Democracy activity.

### Use of technology to communicate with residents

Q How does your authority go about using technology to communicate with residents about the decisions it has made?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

There is a difference between authority types when looking at engaging local residents in making a council decision. This is likely to be rated as effective much more by single-tier (67%) than by two-tier authorities (50%).

One of these easy wins could be to put minutes and agendas of council meetings online, and indeed 91% of those with a higher SOCITM rating of content plus or transactional already do, compared with 73% of those with lower ratings. Of those local authorities that have a good or excellent CPA rating, over a quarter (28%) offer some kind of e-bulletin, compared to only 13% of those with a lower rating. Similarly as already discussed higher rated authorities are more likely to use web-casting/video streaming (12% vs. 1%).

## 2.3 Responsibility for e-Democracy

As with the responsibility for engagement generally, the most common arrangement for using technology to engage local residents is to share responsibility between different officers and members. However, in the case of members the responsibility tends to be split more evenly, with around one third of authorities having a single member taking the lead (33%), two-fifths sharing the responsibility between a number of members (43%), whilst in a quarter of cases, no member has overall responsibility (24%).

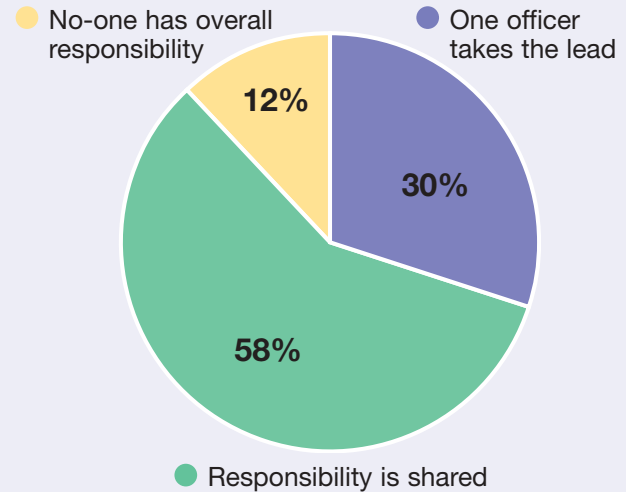
In the case of officers, the most common arrangement is for the responsibility to be shared (58%), whilst in three in ten cases (30%) a single officer takes the lead. Only one in eight local authorities (12%) do not nominate anybody as having overall responsibility. This suggests that e-Democracy might be more actively led by officers rather than members.

### Responsibility for using technology to engage local residents

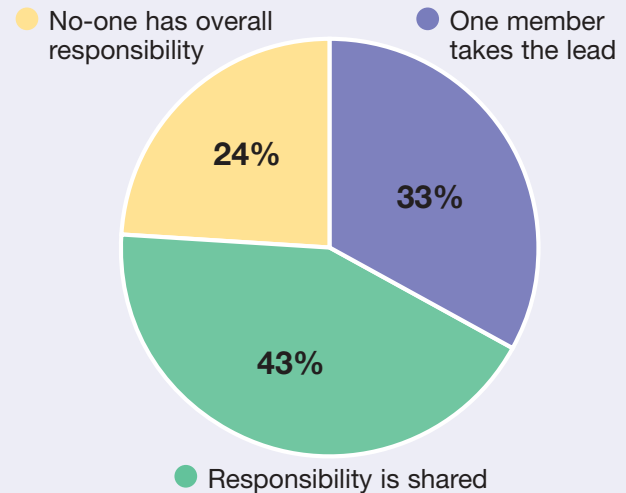
Q Is there a single officer who takes the overall lead in using technology to engage local residents within your local authority, or is the responsibility shared amongst different officers?

Q Is there a single member who takes the lead in using technology to engage local residents or is the responsibility shared amongst different councillors?

#### OFFICER



#### MEMBER



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

In comparison with responsibility for engaging local residents, the responsibility for using technology to engage local residents is more likely to be lead by one officer or member, or

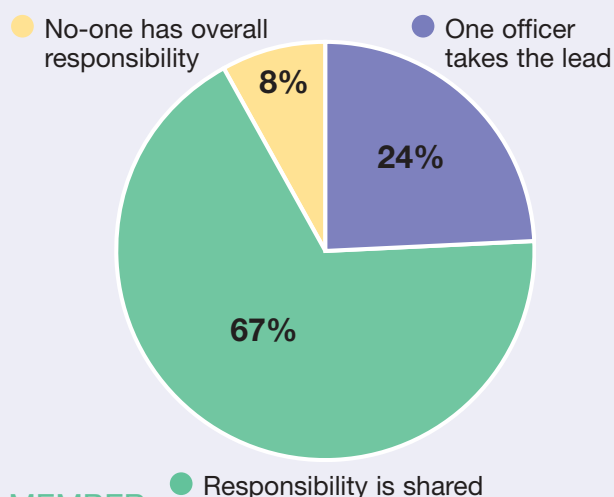
indeed for there to be no-one with overall responsibility, or for there to be no-one with overall responsibility.

### Responsibility for engaging local residents

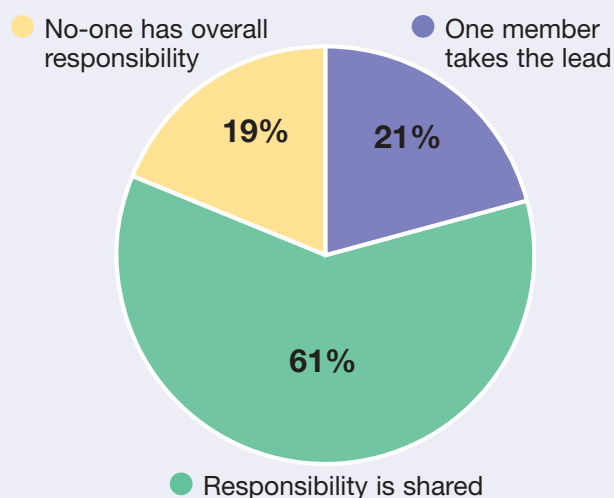
**Q** Is there a single officer who takes the overall responsibility for engaging local residents, or is the responsibility shared amongst different officers?

**Q** Is there a single member who takes the overall responsibility amongst your local councillors in engaging local residents, or is the responsibility shared across different members?

#### OFFICER



#### MEMBER



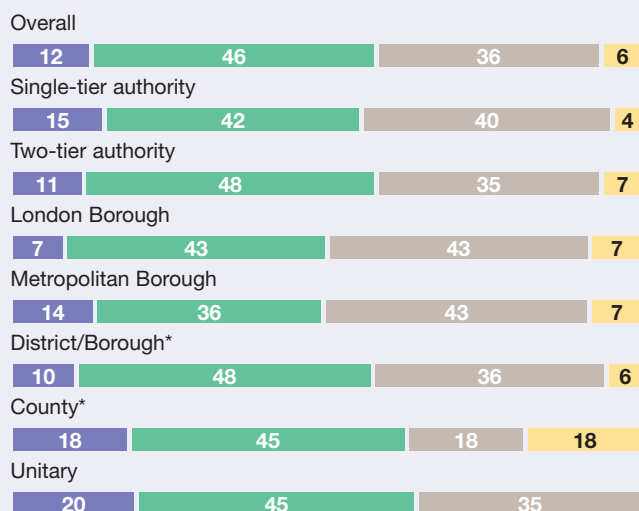
Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

Over a third (36%) of authorities have a group or committee within the council that has responsibility for e-Democracy, which is far more than those that have one with responsibility for engaging residents generally (16%). This suggests that e-Democracy might be providing a focus to establishing formal arrangements for engaging residents. In addition, a further 6% of authorities have a group or committee that has a multi-agency composition. Although 12% of respondents do not know if there is a group or committee that is responsible for e-Democracy, nearly half (46%) state that the authority does not have one. This rises to over half (56%) of those authorities who have a weak, poor or fair CPA score, and falls to 41% of those who have a good or excellent rating. There is also a slight difference between authority type, as shown by the chart below.

### Group or committee responsible for e-democracy

**Q** Does your authority have a group or committee that has responsibility for e-democracy?

- % Don't know
- % No
- % Yes, within this council only
- % Yes, a multiagency group



\*Two-tier authority

Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## 2.4 Written e-Democracy strategies

One in five (19%) authorities have a written e-Democracy strategy, around the same proportion as those who say they will have one within the next six months (17%), or longer (19%). Three in ten authorities (28%) have no plans to set-up a written strategy; this rises to 44% of those who do not see engaging residents as a corporate priority, and falls to 23% of those who do have such a priority. This suggests that in authorities where engaging residents is a priority, e-Democracy is maybe seen to be a tool to achieve this. This finding is consistent across authority type.

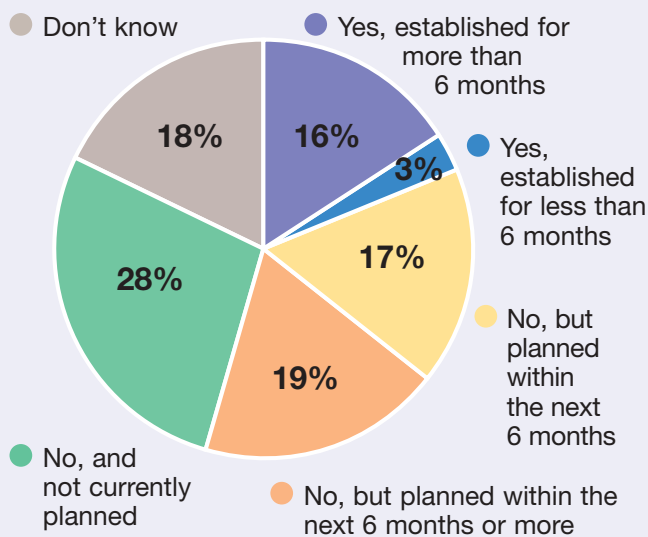
However, only one in ten authorities (10%) provides written guidelines for officers on the appropriate tools and techniques to use when dealing with e-Democracy. A higher proportion of authorities produce guidelines for local participants about acceptable behaviour online (33%). It is positive that there are written strategies and guides for e-Democracy, but this is certainly an area that could be improved upon.

## 2.5 e-Democracy resources

One third (33%) of authorities have identified resources in their budget specifically for e-Democracy, and a further quarter (24%) plan to. One in five (22%) have not identified such resources, and do not have any plans to do so in the future.

### Written e-Democracy strategy

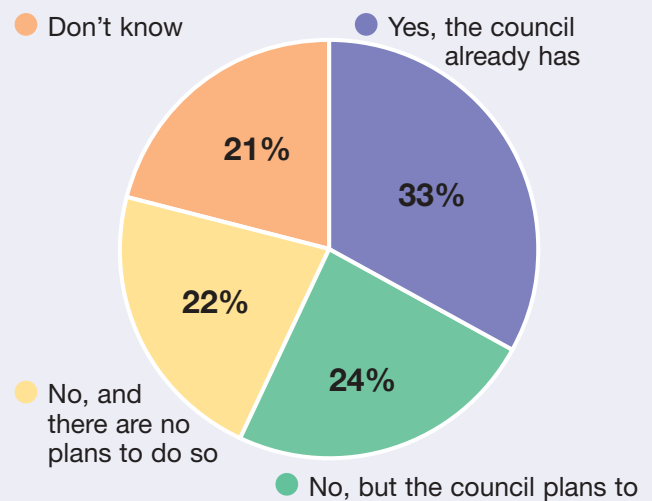
Q Does your council have a written strategy on e-Democracy?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

### e-Democracy budget

Q Have you identified resources in your e-government budget specifically for e-Democracy?

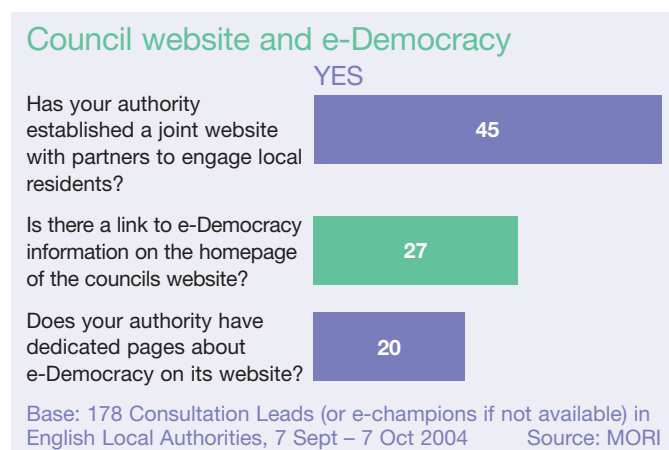


Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

Those more likely to have a budget in place are those who have a written strategy for e-Democracy (55% vs. 28% who do not have a written strategy), and/or have a group or committee responsible for e-Democracy (41% vs. 27%). Those with a higher SOCITM rating are also more likely to have a budget for e-Democracy (43% vs. 27%), suggesting a history of making resources and budget available for websites and new technology to engage residents.

## 2.6 e-Democracy and the council website

One in five authorities have pages on their website dedicated to e-Democracy (20%), and over one in four authorities (27%) maintain a link to information about e-Democracy on other sites from their own website. Nearly half (45%) have established pages with partners to engage local residents.



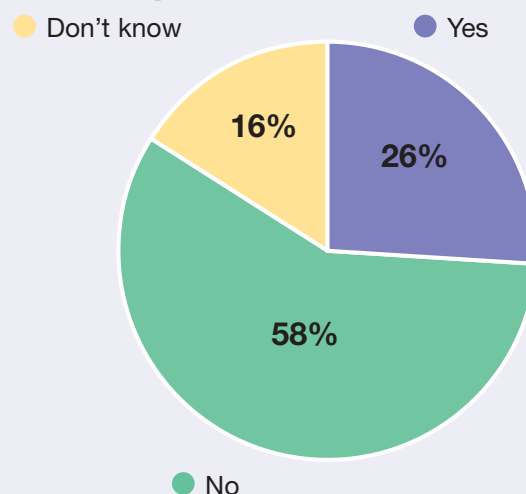
## 2.7 Council research into e-Democracy

Around one third of authorities have conducted research into e-Democracy with either councillors or residents (26% and 31% respectively).

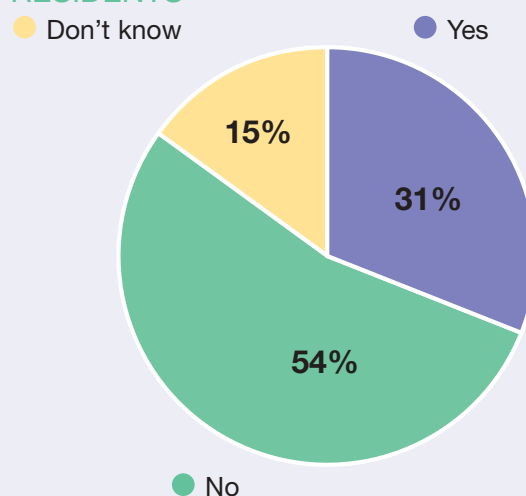
### Research into e-Democracy

Q Have you conducted any consultation or research into e-Democracy with members or residents? (eg as part of a democratic services or communication review)

#### MEMBERS



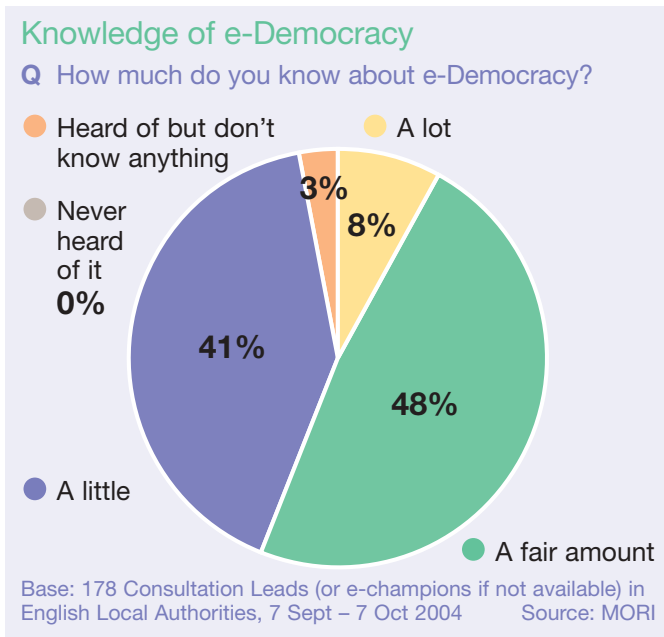
#### RESIDENTS



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## 2.8 Officer knowledge of e-Democracy

The majority of respondents claim to know a little, or a fair amount, about e-Democracy (41% and 48% respectively). Less than one in ten (8%) claim to know a lot, whilst one in twenty (5%) have heard of it but do not know anything about it. In areas with a written strategy a higher proportion of respondents say they know a fair amount about e-Democracy (64% vs. 44%).



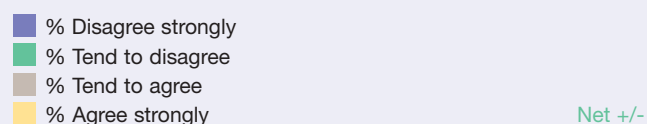
## 2.9 Attitudes of officers and members

Perceived attitudes of officers and members towards e-Democracy are mixed. A third (35%) of respondents agree that there is a general enthusiasm amongst members and officers to fully embrace e-Democracy. This rises to nearly half (47%) of those authorities who have a higher SOCITM rating of content plus or transactional, and slips to 27% of those with a lower rating. This suggests that a history of investing and developing usable websites is a good indicator of support for e-Democracy within the authority.

Worryingly, more respondents disagree than agree that senior council officers are actively involved in promoting e-Democracy (42% vs. 32%). Agreement is higher among those authorities that have a written strategy for e-Democracy (61% vs. 26%), suggesting either that when a senior officer is promoting e-Democracy there is a greater likelihood that a written strategy will be created, or that a written strategy facilitates activity among senior officers.

### Attitude of officers and members

**Q** In your opinion, please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the statements below with regards to your authority?



Members and officers tend to see e-Democracy as another initiative that they have to implement



There is a general enthusiasm amongst members and officers to fully embrace e-Democracy



Senior council officers are actively involved in promoting e-Democracy



Members are not willing to back up their support of e-Democracy with investment and resources



Members are concerned about the increased level of public awareness that the implementation of e-Democracy potentially offers



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI  
“Don’t know” responses and “Neither agree nor disagree” responses are excluded from the chart.

A majority (51%) agree that members and officers tend to see e-Democracy as another initiative that they have to implement. This rises to 66% of authorities where engaging local residents is not a corporate priority, suggesting that perhaps some authorities see specific strategies for engaging residents as unnecessary.

Resources for e-Democracy are limited and a quarter (25%) of respondents do state that members are not willing to back up support for e-Democracy with investment and resources. Yet these are outweighed by the 35% of respondents who disagree, suggesting that when members do buy-in to the idea of e-Democracy that in the majority of cases this leads to increased resources being made available.

Finally, a minority of members (19%) are seen to be concerned about the increased level of public awareness that the implementation of e-Democracy offers, more than outweighed by the 41% who are viewed not to be concerned.

It should be noted that there is a relatively high proportion that neither agree nor disagree with the above statements, or do not know enough to answer.

## 2.10 Impact of e-Democracy

The impact of e-Democracy is perceived positively. In particular more respondents agree than disagree that electronic communications has meant that voluntary and community groups can now communicate more effectively with the council (64%), that it is a way for residents to discuss and debate issues with each other (59%), and has made the council more transparent and open to the public (43%). Greater perceived transparency is seen to have occurred in councils with a higher SOCITM rating (57% vs. 34%), perhaps suggesting that better rated websites are linked to the perception of improved transparency.

## Impact of e-Democracy

Q In your opinion, please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the statements below with regards to your authority?

■ % Disagree strongly    ■ % Tend to disagree  
■ % Tend to agree    ■ % Agree strongly    Net +/-

Electronic communications has meant that voluntary and community groups can now communicate more effectively with the council



e-Democracy is a way for residents to discuss and debate issues with each other



e-Democracy has made the council more transparent and open to the public



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004    Source: MORI

It should be noted that there is a relatively high proportion that neither agree nor disagree with the above statements, or do not know enough to answer.

## 2.11 Effectiveness and importance of e-channels

When asked about the importance and effectiveness of different e-channels, responses fall into three distinct categories.

It should be noted that respondents were asked to comment about how these channels engage the public, rather than discuss the delivery of services. These questions should be viewed as covering this very specific aspect of how these channels work, not as an overall verdict on the usefulness of the channel in general.

### Category A: Currently effective and important over next five years

The first category consists of channels which are seen to be currently effective and important over the next five years in engaging local residents. Of these the internet stands out as the key engagement channel, with three-

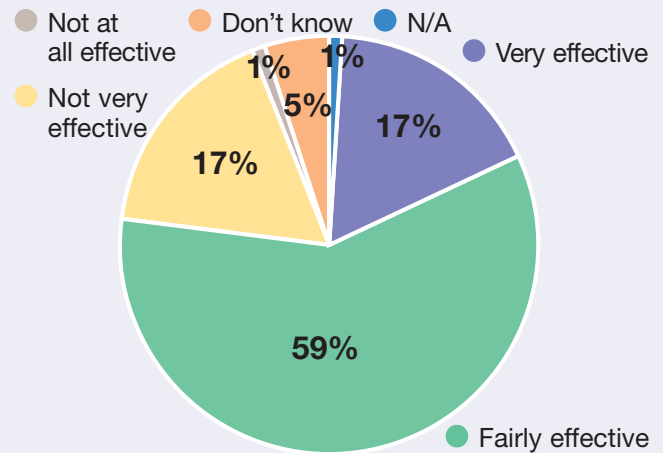
quarters (76%) viewing it currently as effective, and all respondents (100%) viewing it as important over the next five years.

## Importance and effectiveness of the internet

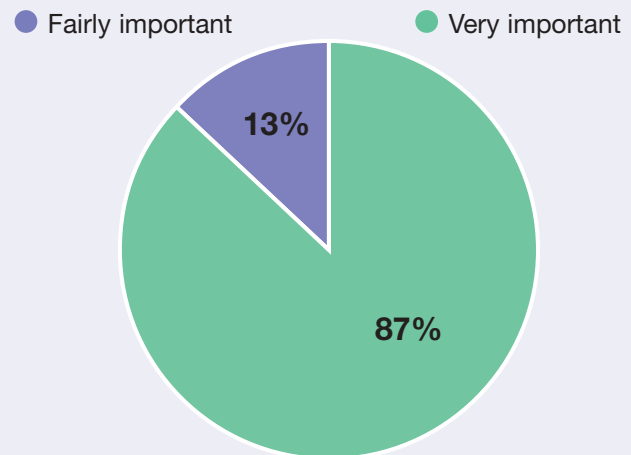
Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?

Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

### EFFECTIVE



### IMPORTANCE



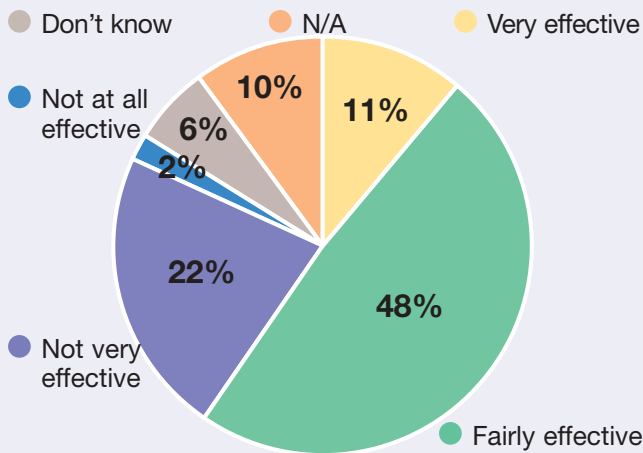
Not very important/not at all important/don't know: no mentions  
 Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004    Source: MORI

Email is also viewed as currently effective (59%) and important over the next five years (97%). These positive findings for the internet and email as a tool for public engagement are consistent across authority type.

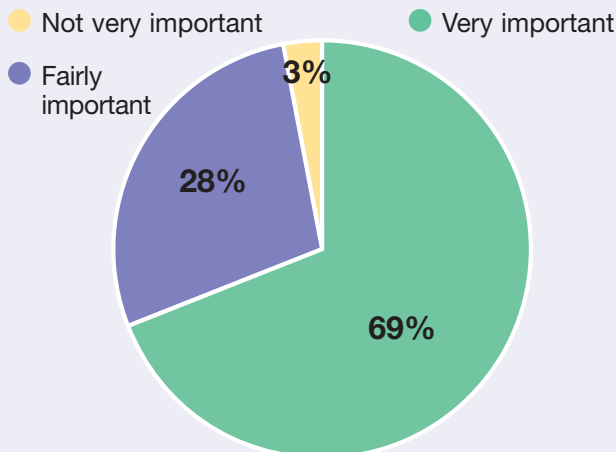
### Importance and effectiveness of email

- Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?
- Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

#### EFFECTIVE



#### IMPORTANCE



Not at all important/don't know: no mentions

Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

### Category B: Currently not effective but will be important in next five years

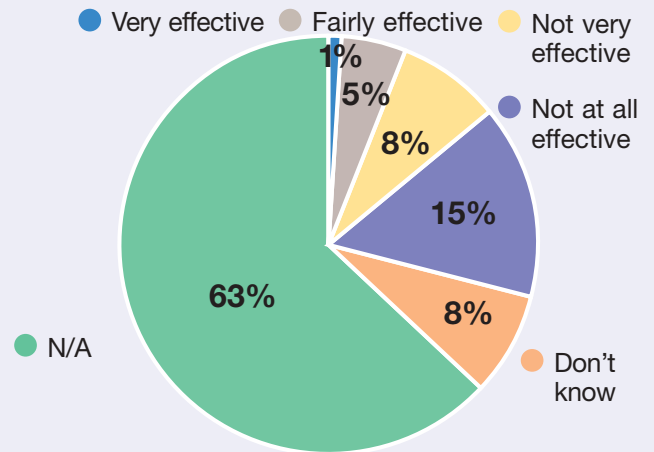
Mobile phone/SMS text messaging is in a category of its own. Three-quarters (78%) of respondents view it as an important channel over the next five years, but very few overall rate it as currently effective (6%). This is mainly because the majority of authorities

have not used this channel, but with nearly a quarter (23%) of all respondents rating the current effectiveness as not effective, the balance of experience is to view this negatively. The experience of using mobile phone/SMS text messaging is more common for single-tier authorities.

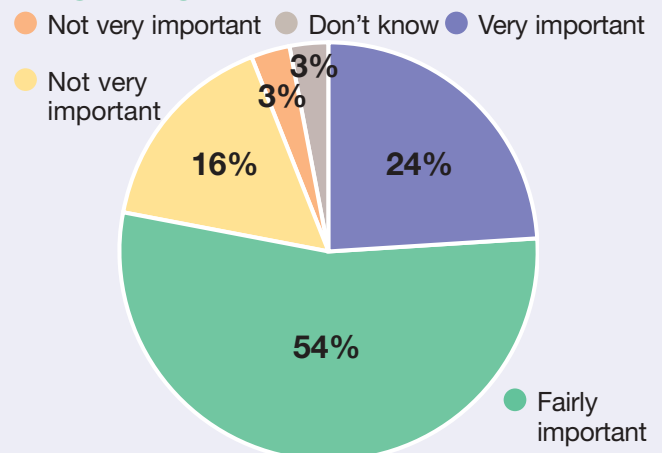
### Importance and effectiveness of mobile phone/SMS text

- Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?
- Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

#### EFFECTIVE



#### IMPORTANCE



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## Category C: Currently not effective, and will not be important in next five years

The final category included three channels (street kiosks, digital television and web-casting/video streaming) which are not currently viewed as that effective, and with a significant proportion who view them as not that important either – in terms of engaging local residents. These findings are consistent across authority type.

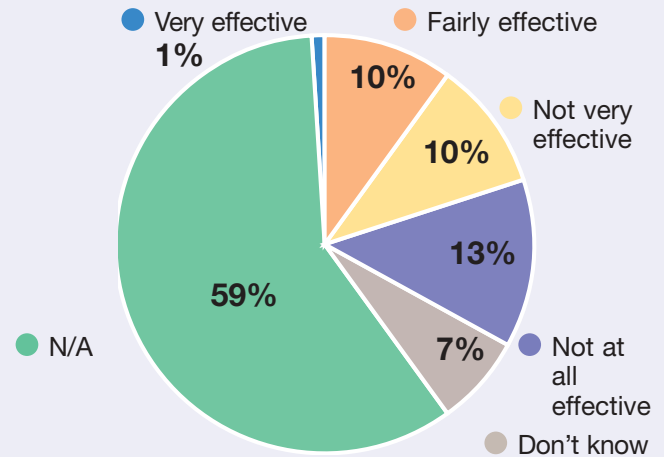
One in nine (11%) respondents view street kiosks as effective, outweighed by the quarter who do not (23%). The majority of respondents have no experience of them. Ratings of importance are divided between those who think they will be important (45%) and those who think they will not be important (49%) in engaging residents over the next five years.

### Importance and effectiveness of street kiosks

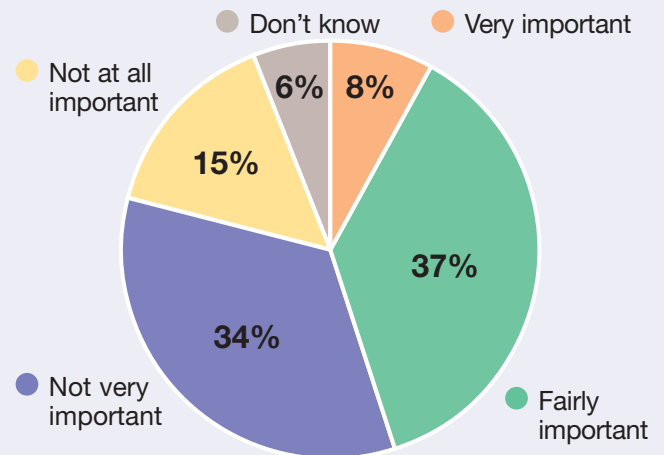
Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?

Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

#### EFFECTIVE



#### IMPORTANCE



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

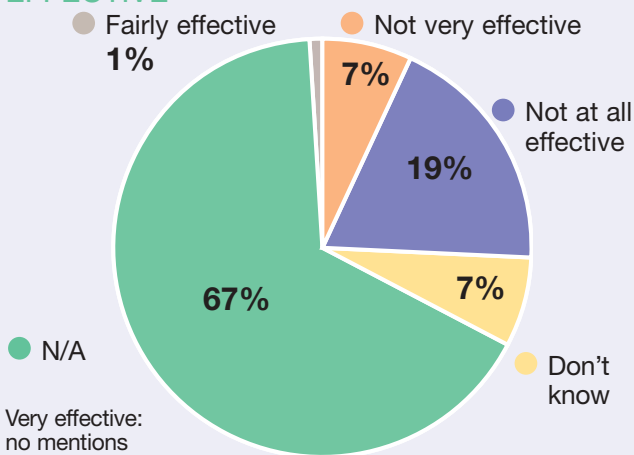
The picture is very similar for digital television. Only a minority have experience of the channel engaging residents, and those who view the channel as not effective (26%) outweigh those who think it is effective (1%). Importance over the next five years is again divided between those who think it will be important (42%) and those who do not (46%).

Web casting/video streaming also shows a similar picture to views on digital television and street kiosks. Few rate it as currently effective (4%), and there is split opinion between those who view it as important (40%) and those who view it as not important (46%) in engaging residents over the next five years.

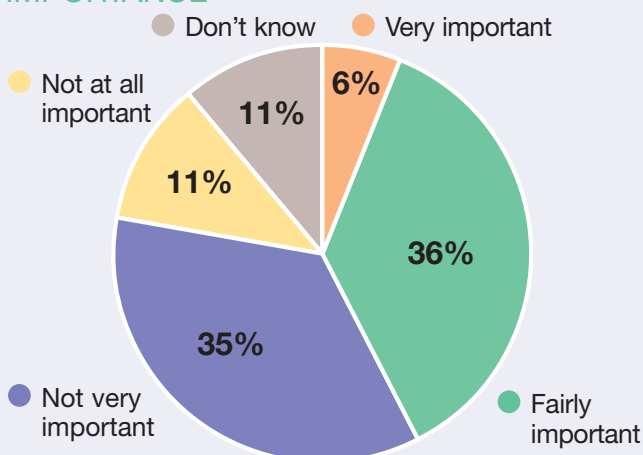
### Importance and effectiveness of digital television

- Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?
- Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

#### EFFECTIVE



#### IMPORTANCE

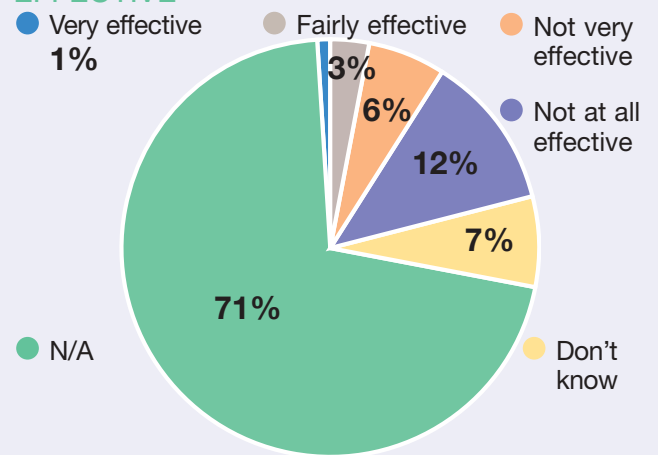


Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

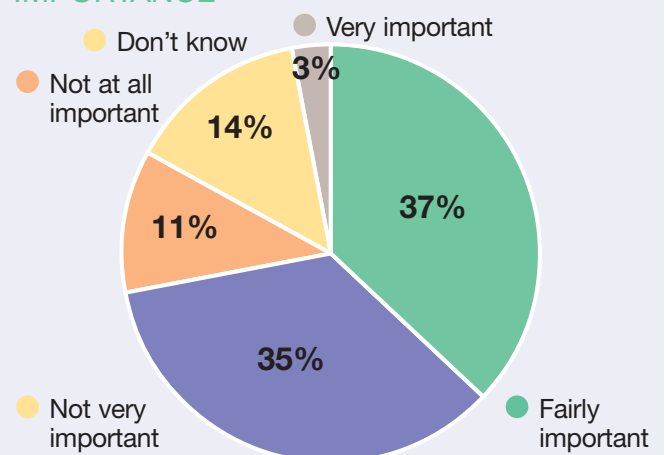
### Importance and effectiveness of web casting/video streaming

- Q Generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?
- Q Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be in engaging local residents?

#### EFFECTIVE



#### IMPORTANCE



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

## 2.12 Priority groups

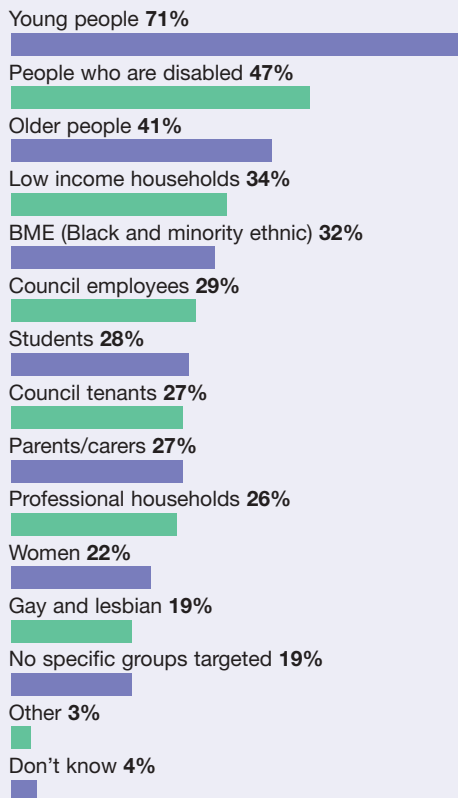
Young people are, by far, the most common group targeted for engagement through e-Democracy (71%), probably because this is a traditionally under engaged group and one which many authorities might perceive could be readily engaged through new technology. The next most common groups to engage are people who are disabled and older people who are selected by nearly half of respondents as groups specifically targeted by e-Democracy (47% and 41% respectively).

Having a committee does have a relationship with which groups are felt to be a priority, perhaps giving an insight to the nature of the work of these committees – are their decisions focused on customer groups? If a council has a committee for e-Democracy then respondents are more likely to say that young people (84% vs. 62% of those without a specific committee), people who are disabled (59% vs. 39%), and low income groups (43% vs. 28%) and parents/carers (35% vs. 21%) are priority groups than those without a committee. If there is not a committee there is a greater likelihood that no specific groups are targeted (25% vs. 11%). Causality may also be the other way, with a council traditionally more focused on customer groups more likely to have a committee.

There are few differences by authority type, but there is a significant difference in terms of the two-thirds (64%) of respondents from London Boroughs viewing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups as a priority for engagement through e-Democracy, compared to 28% of those in two-tier areas.

### Priority groups for engagement via e-Democracy

Q Which of these groups do you feel are a priority for engagement through e-Democracy?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

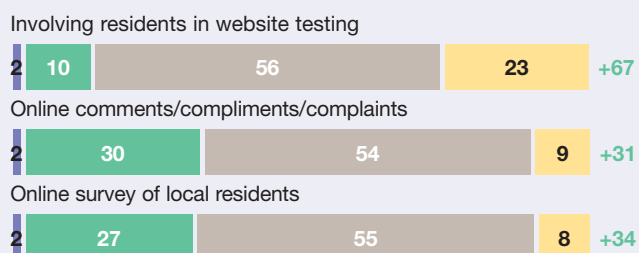
## 2.13 Effectiveness of online data collection

In terms of effectiveness of the use of online surveys and comments, the majority of respondents feel that online comments, complaints and suggestions are effective (63%), reflecting the focus placed upon such online channels. A similar proportion of respondents (63%) feel that online surveys of local residents are effective.

### Effectiveness of use of online surveys, comments and website testing

Q Generally speaking, how effective do you think the council are at the following?

■ % Not at all effective    ■ % Not very effective  
■ % Fairly effective    ■ % Very effective    Net +/-



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

It is not clear the extent to which officers are aware of the typical profiles of users/non users of e-Democratic services. Almost one in five officers suggest that the sort of people making use of e-Democratic services are similar to those who take part in traditional forms of engagement (15%) – whilst three in five (63%) do not know. Only one in five (21%) say they manage to engage different people by using new technology.

## 2.14 e-Democracy success factors

Increasing public engagement is the most commonly cited success factor for encouraging authorities to deliver more e-Democracy (25%), rising to 28% of those for whom engagement is a corporate priority (falling to 12% for those who do not have this as a priority). Other common responses include improving public perceptions/satisfaction (22%), improving the council’s CPA ranking, or providing evidence of cost savings (18% and 17% respectively). The need for cost savings is particularly apparent in two-tier District or Borough Council areas (21%), as opposed to Counties (mentioned by no-one). It is very encouraging that no respondent said that “nothing” would encourage the authority to deliver e-Democracy.

### Success factors influential in encouraging greater delivery of e-Democracy

Q Which success factor would be most influential in encouraging your authority to deliver more e-Democracy?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

There is a difference in the relative mentions of each success factor. Increased public engagement is in the top two priorities for all authorities, but CPA ranking is the most influential success factor for both Unitaries and London Boroughs.

**Q** Which success factor would be most influential in encouraging your authority to deliver more e-Democracy?

Two-tier district/ borough	County	Unitary	London Borough	Metropolitan
(119) %	(11) %	(20) %	(14) %	(14) %
<b>1</b> Improved public perceptions/satisfaction (25%)	<b>1</b> Increased public engagement (45%)	<b>1</b> CPA ranking (35%)	<b>1</b> CPA ranking (36%)	<b>2</b> Increased public engagement (43%)
<b>2</b> Increased public engagement (23%)	<b>2</b> CPA ranking (27%)	<b>2</b> Increased public engagement (15%)	<b>2</b> Increased public engagement (21%)	<b>2</b> Improved public perceptions/satisfaction (36%)
<b>3</b> Evidence of cost savings (21%)	<b>3</b> Improved public perceptions/satisfaction (9%)	<b>3</b> Improved public perceptions/satisfaction (10%)	<b>3</b> Improved public perceptions/satisfaction (14%)	<b>3</b> CPA Ranking (7%)
<b>4</b> – CPA Ranking (13%)	<b>4</b> – Don't know (18%)	<b>=3</b> – Evidence of cost savings (10%)	<b>=3</b> – Evidence of cost savings (14%)	<b>=3</b> – Evidence of cost savings (7%)

Source: MORI

When asked for an example, if any, of e-Democracy in the local area that went especially well a range of different and creative e-Democracy activities were mentioned.

We held a web cast for a particular meeting about a significant local issue around the local airport. We had a live feed into a number of locations so people would be able to view the meeting even if they could not get into the main council chamber.

### Metropolitan Borough Council

We have just started a scheme, suggested by youth councillors, where we have a text number that residents – especially children, can report vandalism/repairs in play areas to the council.

### Two-tier District/Borough Council

Local strategic partnership worked with a group of young people to develop a web portal/survey specifically designed to engage young people with shaping the priorities for the community strategy.

### County Council

In general most positive comments about e-Democracy relate to online consultation.

Local plan consultation was carried out via the website – very successful and used as a good practice model.

### Two-tier District/Borough Council

Online consultations eg on website redesign or school reorganisation.

### Metropolitan Borough Council

We set up a people panel and sent questions electronically to get a rapid response. We are in a very low income area and we did not expect such a positive response.

### Two-tier District/Borough Council

[We have seen the] establishment of an e-citizen panel through which surveys can be completed. In addition, all emails from the council include a link to an on-line survey about the experience of contacting the council.

### Two-tier District/Borough Council

However, the most consistent message is that it is “too early to say” with the majority of councils unable to identify an e-Democracy project that went especially well. When commenting on a project there is a lack of detail as to why the project was successful, with suggestions in the comments that they are rated as successful if they went smoothly without a hitch, or engaged a number of people. There are also a number of comments about e-Democracy in terms of electronic voting and registering people to vote.

[We had] electronic local elections in 2003. [It was] well received by residents in their feedback and a 20% take up amongst voters.

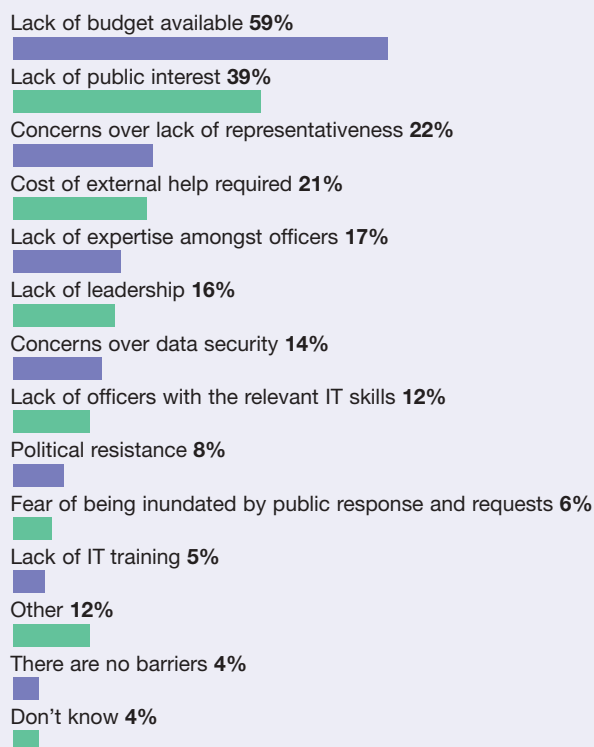
### Two-tier District/Borough Council

## 2.15 Barriers to e-Democracy

Lack of budget is the most commonly cited barrier for a lack of implementation of e-Democratic services (59%). It is worth bearing in mind that only 33% of councils have specifically allocated funding for e-Democratic services. Other common responses include a perception of a lack of public interest (39%), the cost of external help (21%), and concerns over a lack of representativeness (22%), or a lack of expertise amongst officers (17%). The findings are also consistent across authority types.

### Main barriers to the implementation of e-Democracy

Q Which are the TWO or THREE main barriers that prevent your authority from implementing e-Democracy?



Base: 178 Consultation Leads (or e-champions if not available) in English Local Authorities, 7 Sept – 7 Oct 2004 Source: MORI

For weak, poor or fair CPA rated authorities there is a greater concern about the lack of budget available (68% vs. 54%) and a lack of leadership (25% vs. 8%) than those rated good or excellent. Lack of leadership is also more likely to be cited in authorities without a group or committee responsible for e-Democracy (22%) compared to those who do have one (8%). Lack of public interest is seen to be more of a barrier in authorities that do not have engaging residents as a corporate priority (56% vs. 34%), again suggesting that some authorities are not convinced of the need for further effort to engage residents.

Only four percent of respondents state that there are no barriers, showing that there is work required to ensure that e-Democracy can be implemented by local authorities.

When asked to outline an example, if any, of e-Democracy in the local area that went particularly badly there are few examples. As with examples of where it has worked well there are many comments along the lines of it being “too early to say.” Of those who were able to give an example most of the failings are seen to relate to the limitations of technology or the approach.

Web casting of council meetings. Poor sound quality which would have required substantial investment in council chamber for a very small level of public interest.

County Council

We had an online survey as part of the 2004/2005 budget consultation. As with the reply slip in the local paper, we felt that the exercise wasn't useful quantitatively and we had to disregard some of the replies. We did discussion groups which were more effective.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

The continuous use of e-software without any regard to good practice in research is an on-going issue, because other methods might be more relevant and better for communications and communities.

County Council

“Ask the Leader” during 2003 Local Democracy Week allowing citizens to submit questions to the Leader of the Council online. Poor response mainly due to poor marketing.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

The volume of response is seen to be vital, with many commenting on e-Democracy activity that went badly in terms of a poor response rate.

A website designed to provide a tool for consultation with young people. [There was a] very poor response from young people in the District.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

The Council placed a number of e-kiosks around the area to enable its citizens to access information. Two of these sites were within the Town Hall reception and at a Customer Help Point. Neither of these two were particularly well used.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

A budget consultation by on-line questionnaire had a very low response rate.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

There are also comments about people hijacking the process for political ends.

The e-polling facility had multiple 'votes' by one person who was trying to prove that it had no validity.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

We had a quick vote on the website and we created questions for it, and some councillors were making political mischief of some of the questions and we were a bit disappointed. It was abused for political purposes.

Two-tier District/Borough Council

## 3 Conclusions

### Conclusions on what the survey tells us about council's progress towards IPPR's Good Practice Guidelines for e-Democracy

In 2002 the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published a report called "e-participation in local government\*." In this report IPPR presented a set of guidelines that challenged all local authorities to learn from best practice when implementing e-Democracy initiatives.

Bristol City Council, in its role as evaluation lead for the Local e-Democracy National Project, has revisited IPPR's guidelines. The aim is to both assess what the survey tells us about local authority's current e-Democracy practice against the guidelines and at the same time, to generally review the 'currency' of the guidelines, to see how pertinent they are to authorities two years on. Our conclusions are set out below.

IPPR's first good practice guideline related to marketing; "Citizens can only take part in e-Democracy activities if they are aware of the possibilities. E-Democracy initiatives must be well marketed to attract attention".

### E-Democracy and Improved Performance Ratings

The survey suggests that marketing remains an issue for authorities. The analysis demonstrates that higher rated CPA authorities are generally doing more to market e-Democracy to citizens than their lower rated counterparts. Higher rated authorities are more likely to promote e-Democracy through libraries, poster campaigns, email and text. They are also more likely to web cast council meetings. However, the survey cannot explain why the association may exist. For example, it may be that a 'good' council's website increases overall transparency and makes it easier for inspectors to learn about the authority's performance. Alternatively, an authority that actively markets e-Democracy may be more responsive to citizen and customer's views and this may have an impact on the overall rating. So, whilst the possibility of a link gives weight to IPPR's call for better marketing, further research is required in order to understand the basis for any association with ratings.

### Marketing as a Quick Win Activity

The current survey suggests that authorities should see marketing as a 'quick win' activity. Many authorities appear to be placing less emphasis on marketing e-Democracy than on promoting off-line forms of engagement and information. The survey identifies the potential for authorities to 'put this right' by simply take existing offline content and making it available on line. This would be a positive first step towards meeting the IPPR guideline.

\* Kearns, I, Bend, J and Stern, B (2002) e-participations in local government, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), 2002.

## And Don't Forget to Tell the Staff

In the survey, authorities highlight “employees” as one of the best ways to promote e-Democracy. Whilst it is positive that e-channels are seen to form part of a dialogue between officers and service users, employees must have access to information about e-Democracy activities if these exchanges are to be effective. This highlights the importance of strategies to promote and market e-Democracy internally to staff as well as externally to citizens.

## Responsiveness

IPPR’s guidelines addressed the need to be responsive: “If citizens are to take part in e-democracy activities, they need to know that their views will be taken into account and their complaints dealt with.”

The survey identifies that authorities have made some progress with ‘top-down’ approaches to e-Democracy but less so with approaches that are ‘ground-up’. In particular, authorities are likely to be offering on-line suggestion and complaints schemes and to be using e-Democracy approaches to consult citizens on pre-determined options. Fewer authorities operate e-Democracy at a more participatory (ground-up) level. To become more responsive, or at least informed about the citizen agenda, authorities need also to prioritise ‘ground-up’ approaches to e-Democracy.

## Rules and Guidelines

A further IPPR guideline concerned the need for published rules and guidelines; “e-participation is a new form of participation and the rules of engagement are therefore not obvious. Published rules and guidelines are important to clarifying expectations and obligations”. IPPR also advocated the use of independent moderators: “Moderation by an independent official can ensure that e-participation stays focused and useful and that any participation rules and guidelines are observed in practice”.

Facilitating ‘ground-up’ approaches to e-Democracy involves authorities relinquishing some hold over the agenda. To do so is not without risk and arguably, the requirement for clear guidelines and independent moderation is greater when an authority operates e-Democracy at this level.

Two years after the IPPR report a third of authorities offer guidelines for participants about acceptable behaviour online and one in ten publish guidance for officers on appropriate e-Democracy approaches. This is perhaps disappointing and more needs to be done if authorities are to become responsive to issues raised by citizens through e-Democracy activities.

## Partnership and Independent Moderation

It is positive that many authorities indicate they are working in partnership with other organisations to deliver e-Democracy. The need to work in partnership to overcome ‘disengagement’ was another of IPPR’s guidelines. Most authorities agree that communication between partners has been improved through the use of e-Tools. The next challenge is to attempt to advance this.

If officers become familiar with the tools within their work environment they are perhaps more likely to try to use these tools to engage citizens and service users. It may be that the increase in partnership working will lead, in time, to the increased use of independent moderators and coordinators or to the use of multi-agency teams.

IPPR also noted that “the skills required to engage in e-participation must be recognised and training provided to develop them.” The still limited availability of e-moderation training is a gap that has been re-iterated through the Local e-Democracy National Project, which includes a pilot e-moderators course, aimed at local authority employees and a pilot course aimed at would-be participants.

## Inclusion, Monitoring and Data Protection

The IPPR guidelines also challenged local authorities to ensure that e-Democracy is as inclusive as possible: “To have any legitimacy in democratic terms, e-participation efforts must be as inclusive as possible and must not be allowed to become a channel where those who engage already can simply do so more easily and more conveniently”.

In the survey local authorities identify diverse audiences as priority for involvement in e-Democracy. In particular, authorities prioritise young people but also older people and other ‘harder to hear’ groups. Clearly, authorities aspire to the IPPR’s call for inclusion but few can know how successful they are as the survey identifies only a small number of authorities who monitor which demographic groups are using or not using e-Democracy opportunities.

Monitoring is important if authorities are to be certain that priority audiences are being targeted effectively. At the same time, the IPPR guidelines noted the importance of privacy policies: “It is important that authorities both respect privacy in any e-participation activities and communicate clearly their data gathering practices to the citizen”. The balance between protecting participants’ confidentiality and monitoring take up of e-Democracy may cause authorities some conflict. It is suggested that this is an area where further guidance may help in encouraging authorities to develop existing practices.

In summary, it appears that the IPPR Good Practice Guidelines for e-Democracy remain relevant to authorities. In some instances, the survey suggests that progress can be demonstrated since the guidelines were published. In more areas there is still work to do. Perhaps the main change, not specifically addressed by the IPPR guidelines, is the range of e-channels that authorities have commented on in the current survey. Authorities in particular see SMS text messaging as a communications channel that will become more important to them in future. Whilst the role of the internet and email is clearly understood as important there is also less certainty about the potential for mechanism like digital tv, street kiosks and web casting. This highlights that further good practice guidelines will need to be identified as the mechanisms through which authorities pursue e-Democracy develop and change, often rapidly and over a relatively short space of time. The strategies that council’s adopt will need to be broad and robust if they are to be effective documents throughout this period of technological change.

Stephen Hilton. Evaluation Lead, Local e-Democracy National Project, Bristol City Council



# Appendices

Profile of responses

Topline findings

Additional verbatim comments

# 36

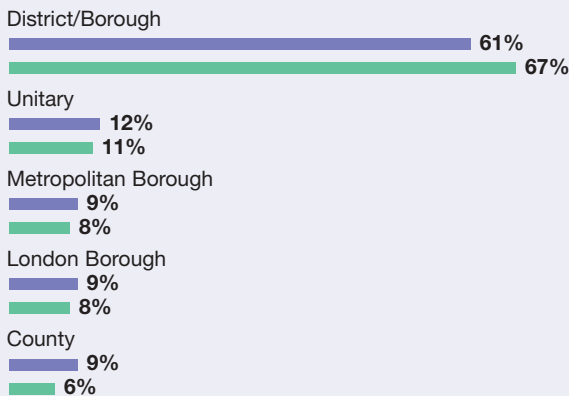
## Profile of responses

The chart below shows the profile of responses to the e-Democracy survey compared with the profile of English local authorities.

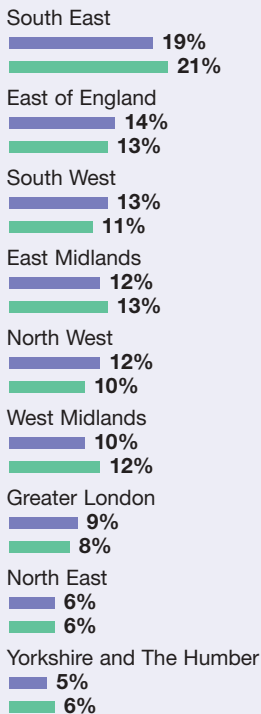
### Profile of responses

- England (388 authorities, including City of London)
- e-Democracy Survey (178 authorities)

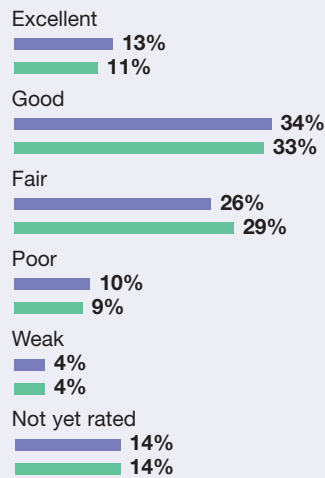
#### Authority type



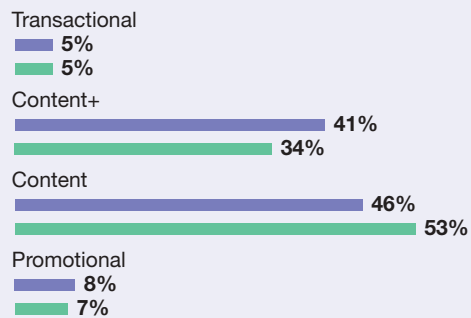
#### Government Office Region (GOR)



#### CPA Ranking (By end of October 2004)



#### SOCITM website rating (Better connected 2004)



Source: MORI

# Topline findings

## e-Democracy Local Authority Web Survey Final Topline

- Results are based on 178 questionnaires completed online with Head of Communication (or similar position) in English local authorities. Emails were sent to all 388 English local authority Heads of Communications (or similar position) with only one reply allowed per authority. The response rate is 46%. All non-responses were followed up by a regular telephone reminder, and respondents were given the opportunity to complete the survey online themselves, or to go through the survey with the telephone interviewer.
- Unless otherwise stated, results are based on all respondents. Please note that no sub-group findings for any group of less than 10 respondents are shown, following Market Research Society guidelines. Also where a small base size between 10 and 50 respondents is presented the data is given in the number of replies (the “n” figures) rather than an overall percentage.
- Fieldwork conducted between 7th September and 7th October 2004.
- Data are unweighted.
- Where figures do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple coding or computer rounding.

## Section 1

Welcome to the e-Democracy Census 2004, and thank you for taking part. The survey is being conducted by MORI and is divided into two sections:

**Section 1:** This section asks for information about your local authority, for example whether there is information about e-Democracy on your website. All answers that you give in this section will be made publicly available. We will be using this information to map e-Democracy activity across the country, and your local authority will be identified.

**Section 2:** This section asks for your opinions about e-Democracy. As with all opinion surveys conducted by MORI this section will be **totally anonymous and confidential**. MORI is bound by a professional code of conduct and will not attribute the views to any individual or analyse the responses of groups of less than 10 people. Please be assured of this, and give your open and honest views. The survey data will also be held on a secure MORI website. This section will enable us to assess if there are any barriers to implementing e-democracy.

If you have any problems completing this survey, or have any questions about confidentiality, please contact Russell Pask at MORI on 020 7347 3234 or [russell.pask@mori.com](mailto:russell.pask@mori.com).

The survey is very straightforward and should only take around 20 minutes of your time to complete. The first few questions relate to democracy in general within your authority.

## Part A – Engaging Local Residents

### Q1 Does your authority have a written strategy for engaging local residents?

	%
Yes	76
No	22
Don't know	2

### Q2 Has engaging local residents been agreed as one of your authority's corporate priorities?

	%
Yes	77
No	21
Don't know	2

### Q3 We are interested in how your authority engages local residents. In the last 12 months has your authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through any of the following?

	%
Comments/compliments/complaints scheme	93
Open public meetings	78
Scrutiny/select committees	77
Citizens/Resident Panel	75
Councillor surgery	71
Focus groups	71
Sample surveys	69
Local area/neighbourhood forum	66
Forum for particular groups e.g. Young People/ Black and Ethnic minorities/ Women	62
Open forums at council meetings	51
Petitions	49
Planning for real/ visioning exercises	36
Involving residents in mystery shopping/ service testing	25
Citizen's jury	6
Other (please write in)	10
None of the above	0
Don't know	1

### Q3 Verbatim comments – Others

Additional questions in BVPI survey
Annual Resident's Survey, Roadshows, Videos, through Council web site
Budget consultation exercise
Community Conference
Community Consultation Events
Community Councils
Community roadshows, visual audits
Consultation docs on council's website
Electronic Surveys and Chat Rooms, Community Workshops, Videos, Films
Exhibitions (interactive)
Large-scale in-home face-to-face surveys, Mobile unit with on-demand surgeries
Roadshow events
Safer reading forums
SMS text surveys
Stakeholder Groups such as Crime Reduction Partnership
Web based consultation

### Q4 How does your authority go about communicating with residents about the decisions it has made?

	%
Press releases	100
Publishing minutes/agendas of council meetings	92
Council newspapers/ magazine	90
Face to face briefings	38
Other (please write in)	19
None of the above	0
Don't know	0

### Q4 Verbatim comments – Others

All minutes/agendas on website
Annual report; Best Value Performance Plan
Annual residents guide
Area Forms
Area Forums, Area Co-ordination, Public meetings, Council Open Day, Website, local media
Best Value Summary
District Panel Newsletter
Exhibitions, Parish Council meetings, Partnerships
Local Area Assemblies

Press briefings; if it relates to a consult that we've already done, then project-based newsletters e.g. school walking buses/parks/play schemes

Press releases also on website

Radio interviews

Service newsletters, poster campaigns, website, press campaigns

Specific newsletters

Tenant participation Group

Tenants newsletter

Web site, personal letters from focus groups, area assemblies and resident groups

Web-casting, DIS (web based democratic information system)

Website (13 mentions)

Website and Area Fora

**Q5 Is there a single officer who takes the overall lead in engaging local residents for your authority, or is the responsibility shared amongst different officers?**

	%
One officer takes the lead	24
Responsibility is shared	67
No one has overall responsibility	8

**Q6 Is there a single member who takes the overall lead amongst your local councillors in engaging local residents, or is the responsibility shared across different councillors?**

	%
One member takes the lead	21
Responsibility is shared	61
No one has overall responsibility	19

**Q7 Does your authority have a group or committee that has overall responsibility for engaging local residents?**

	%
Yes, a multiagency group	16
Yes, within this council only	16
No	57
Don't know	11

## Part B – e-Democracy

Since the publication of the 2002 consultation paper *In the Services of Democracy*, central government has been committed to encouraging and supporting a wide range of democratic developments that make the most of new technologies. This work is spearheaded through the development of the Local e-Democracy National Project. The remaining questions relate to e-democracy.

**Q8 Is there a single officer who takes overall lead in using technology to engage local residents within your local authority, or is the responsibility shared amongst different officers?**

	%
One officer takes the lead	30
Responsibility is shared	58
No one takes overall control	12

**Q9 Is there a single member who takes the lead in using technology to engage local residents amongst your local councillors, or is the responsibility shared amongst different members?**

	%
One member takes the lead	33
Responsibility is shared	43
No one takes overall control	24

**Q10 Does your authority have a group or committee that has responsibility for e-Democracy?**

	%
Yes, a multiagency group	6
Yes, within this council only	36
No	46
Don't know	12

**Q11 Does your council have a written strategy on e-Democracy?**

	n
Yes, established for more than six months	16
Yes, established for less than six months	2
No, but planned within next six months	17
No, but planned in six months or more	19
No, and not currently planned	28
Don't know	18

**Q12 e-Democracy is a relatively new form of participation, and the rules of engagement are not obvious. Do you provide published guidelines about which tools and techniques are most appropriate to use?**

	n
Yes	10
No	75
Don't know	15

**Q13 ASK IF YES:**

**Do you provide published guidance for officers on how to manage these tools? (ie How to facilitate an e-forum or conduct an online petition)**

	n
Yes	11
No	6
Don't Know	1

Base: All who produce published guidelines about appropriate e-Democracy tools and techniques (18)

**Q14 Do you provide published guidance for participants about what is acceptable behaviour online?**

	n
Yes	33
No	54
Don't know	13

**Q15 How does your local authority go about engaging local residents through e-Democracy? In the last 12 months has your authority offered or encouraged local residents to have their say through any of the following:**

	n
Online comments/complements/complaints scheme	72
Online surveys of local residents	47
Involving residents in website testing	27
Online citizens/residents Panel	11
Webcast council meetings	9
Online petitions	7
Online scrutiny/select committees	7
Online councillor surgeries	6
Online focus groups	6
Online planning for real/visioning exercises	6
Online local area/neighbourhood forums	5
Web logs	4
Online citizen's jury	1
Other (please write in)	12
None of the above	10
Don't know	3

**Q15 Verbatim comments – Others**

Ask a Question
Ask The Chief and Ask The Leader links on the Council Website
County Councillor own web sites, election results web page, online consultations/questionnaires
e-elections
e-forum on a particular issue
e-polling
Free websites for community groups. Online surgeries and councillor website in development
Hot topics vote
Leaders Forum on website
Online budget consultation exercise
Online consultation
Online Discussion Board
Online forum
Online poll (2 mentions)
Online Polls on specific Topics/Proposals
Online votes (not statistically significant, just for interest, can be useful)
Some of the above are planned for our new panel
Residents can vote
We have online forums on our community portal
Webcasting of local elections in May 2003

**Q16 Do you collect any personal data about users/respondents (e.g. demographic information, postcode details, etc)?**

	%
Yes	39
No	41
Don't know	20

**Q17 How does your authority go about using technology to communicate with residents about the decisions it has made?**

	%
Online press releases	88
Online minutes/agendas of council meetings	80
Online council newspapers/ magazine e-bulletins	58
Web Casting/ Video Streaming	21
Text alerts	6
Web logs	6
Other (PLEASE STATE)	5
None of these	4
Don't know	3
	2

## Part C – e-Democracy enablers and barriers

**Q18 Have you identified resources in your e-government budget specifically for e-Democracy?**

	%
Yes, the council already has	33
No, but the council plans to	24
No, and there are no plans to do so	22
Don't know	21

**Q19 Does your council have a strategy for encouraging more people to get involved in e-Democracy?**

	%
Yes	26
No	58
Don't know	16

The next few questions relate to e-Democracy on your authority's website.

**Q20 Does your authority have dedicated pages about e-Democracy on it's website?**

	%
Yes	20
No	71
Don't know	8

**Q21 Has your authority established a joint website with partners to engage local residents?**

	%
Yes	45
No	53
Don't know	2

**Q22 Is there a link to e-Democracy information on the homepage of the council's website?**

	%
Yes	27
No	66
Don't know	7

**Q23 Does your authority offer free internet access and/or training to local residents to specifically enable them to take part in e-Democracy activities?**

	%
Yes, internet access	24
Yes, training	9
Neither	65
Don't know	8

**Q24 Have you conducted any consultation or research into e-Democracy with councillors or residents ? (eg as part of a democratic services or communication review)**

	Councillors	Residents
	%	%
Yes	26	31
No	58	54
Don't know	16	15

## Part D – Encouraging e-Democracy

### Q25 Which of the following activities does your Council conduct to encourage residents to engage in e-Democracy?

	%
Frontline staff promoting e-enabled services to the public	48
Council paper-based literature	47
'Themed' weeks (eg: Local Democracy Week')	43
Via email enquiries	31
Website promotions	29
Via the local media	28
Promotions in libraries	26
Co-operation with other stakeholders in e-Democracy (eg charities, NGOs)	22
Poster campaigns	19
Community workshops/ICT centres	15
Radio/television interviews	14
Mail shots	12
Training for the public	10
Specific campaign for e-Democracy promotion	6
SMS text messages	5
Other (please write in)	2
No current marketing activity	18
Don't know	10

### Q26 Please briefly outline an example, if any, of e-Democracy in your local area that went especially well, and explain why?

See appendix "Additional verbal comments"

### Q27 Please briefly outline an example, if any, of e-Democracy in your local area that went particularly badly, and explain why?

See appendix "Additional verbal comments"

## Section 2

This section asks for your opinions about e-democracy. As with all opinion surveys conducted by MORI this section will be totally anonymous and confidential. MORI is bound by a professional code of conduct and will not attribute the views to any individual or analyse the responses of groups of less than 10 people. Please be assured of this, and give your open and honest views. The survey data will also be held on a secure MORI website. This section will enable us to assess if there are any barriers to implementing e-democracy.

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## Part A – Engaging local residents

### Q28 Generally speaking, how effective do you think your council is at each of the following?

■ % Very effective    ■ % Fairly effective  
■ % Not very effective    ■ % Not at all effective  
■ % Don't know

Communicating/ informing local residents about council decisions



Consulting local residents about a number of predetermined options



Engaging local residents in making a council decision



## Part B – e-democracy

### Q29 How much do you feel you know about e-Democracy?

	%
A lot	8
A fair amount	48
A little	41
Heard of it but don't know anything	3
Never heard of it	0

## If using e-Democracy at Q15 (Ask for each method)

### Q30 Generally speaking, how effective do you think your council is at each of the following?

Base: If used e-Democracy at Q 15 (base size for individual questions below)

- % Very effective
- % Fairly effective
- % Not very effective
- % Not at all effective
- % Don't know

Online citizens' jury (2) n

Chart not shown due to small base size

Online citizens'/residents panel (19) n



Online comments/complements/complaints scheme (128) %



Online councillor surgeries (11) n



Online focus groups (10) n



Online neighbourhood/local area forums (9) n

Chart not shown due to small base size

Involving residents in website testing (48) %



Online petitions (13) n



Online planning for real / visioning exercises (10) n



Online survey of local residents (84) %



Online scrutiny/select committees (12) n



Webcast Council meetings (16) n



Weblogs (7) n

Chart not shown due to small base size

### Q31 In general, do you know whether the local residents who are involved in e-Democracy are the same residents who are involved in traditional forms of engagement or whether you are engaging different types of people by using technology?

	%
The same types of people	15
Different people	21
Don't know	63

## Part C – e-Democracy enablers and barriers

### Q32 And generally how effective, if at all, do you feel each has been in engaging the public to date in your area?

- % Very effective
- % Fairly effective
- % Not very effective
- % Not at all effective
- % Don't know
- N/A

email



Internet



Digital TV



Mobile phone/SMS



Street kiosks



Web casting/video streaming



### Q33 Over the next five years how important do you think the following channels will be engaging local residents?

- % Very effective
- % Fairly effective
- % Not very effective
- % Not at all effective
- % Don't know

email



Internet



Digital TV



Mobile phone/SMS



Street kiosks



Web casting/video streaming



**Q34 In your opinion, please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the statements below with regards to your authority?**

- % Agree strongly
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither agree nor disagree
- % Tend to disagree
- % Disagree strongly
- % Don't know

**Q34** e-Democracy is a way for residents to discuss and debate issues with each other



**Q35** Senior council officers are actively involved in promoting e-democracy



**Q36** e-Democracy has made the council more transparent and open to the public



**Q37** Members are not willing to back up their support of e-Democracy with investment and resources



**Q38** There is a general enthusiasm amongst members and officers to fully embrace e-democracy



**Q39** Members are concerned about the increased level of public awareness that the implementation of e-Democracy potentially offers



**Q40** Electronic communications has meant that voluntary and community groups can now communicate more effectively with the council



**Q41** Member and officers tend to see e-Democracy as another initiative that they have to implement



**Q42 What are the TWO or THREE main barriers that prevent your authority from implementing e-Democracy?**

	%
Lack of budget available	59
Lack of public interest	39
Cost of external help required	21
Concerns over lack of representativeness	22
Lack of expertise amongst Officers	17
Lack of leadership	16
Concerns over data security	14
Lack of officers with the relevant IT skills	12
Political resistance	8
Fear of being inundated by public response and	

requests	6
Lack of IT training	5
Other (please write in)	12
There are no barriers	4
Don't know	4

**Q42 Verbatim comments – Others**

- Apathy
- If residents don't have access they are excluded
- Initiative overload (2 mentions)
- Insufficient planning
- Just the time it takes to implement it.
- Lack of clear priorities from central government
- Lack of officer time
- Lack of public awareness of the benefits to them
- Lack of research and consultation skills
- Lack of staff time
- Lack of time
- Lack of time and people
- Negative responses from public
- Officer resistance
- One of many initiatives to implement
- Other priorities
- People hours and resources to do it
- Priority focus on rebuilding governance capacity
- Residents not wanting that service
- Resource and focus
- The misuse of forums etc by certain individuals to the extent that new users are discouraged.

## Part D – Encouraging e-Democracy

**Q43 Which success factor would be most influential in encouraging your authority to deliver more e-Democracy?**

	%
Increased public engagement	25
Improved public perceptions/ satisfaction	22
CPA Ranking	18
Evidence of cost savings	17
Higher turnout in local elections	4
Improved performance indicators	4
More joined-up exercises with partners	2
Other (Please write in)	3
Nothing would encourage authority	0
Don't know	4

**Q44 Which of these groups do you feel are a priority for engagement through e-Democracy? Please tick all that apply**

	%
Young people	71
Disabled people	47
Older people	41
Low income households	34
BME (Black and minority ethnic) communities	32
Council employees	29
Students	28
Council tenants	27
Parents /Carers	27
Professional households	26
Women	22
Gays and lesbians	19
Other (please write in)	3
No specific groups targeted	19
Don't know	4

**Q45 The e-Democracy project team may also like to speak to you to discuss your survey responses and any best practice information you have provided. Are you happy for MORI to have your responses identified to the e-Democracy national project and for them to contact you?**

Yes	50
No	50

### Authority Type

	%	n
Two-tier district/borough	67	119
County	6	11
Unitary	11	20
London Borough	8	14
Metropolitan	8	14

### Region

	%	n
East Midlands	13	24
East of England	13	24
Greater London	8	14
North East	6	10
North West	10	18
South East	21	37
South West	11	20
West Midlands	12	21
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	10

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## Additional verbatim comments

### Q26 Please briefly outline an example, if any, of e-democracy in your local area that went especially well, and explain why?

(Almost) live publication of election results on the council's website during the last two local elections.

A key project for the council has been the parishes online project, giving parish councils access to it training and funding towards it hardware, software and website development

A silver surfer's project that enables local people at a number of outlets to be trained and access the internet.

Asking our residents panel to come and help us with the testing/development of our actual website interface.

Cannot comment

Community website is another channel of communication, very good results for e-voting pilot

Consultation on last years budget-it was the first time we had done it and it went smoothly.

Consultation with local young people during local democracy week

Contributions to our UDP

Council tax consultations well received by public

Currently running an online consultation with [our] citizen panel. 140 people have signed up to take part in the consultation. Evaluation is being carried out by the Oxford Internet Institute.

Don't know

Effort in respect of postal voting. It went well and publicised generally on the website.

Electronic local elections in 2003. Well received by residents in their feedback and a 20% take up amongst voters.

Fluoridisation of water supply in [our area]. In November 2003, a task group of the overview & scrutiny committee was asked to research public opinion into water fluoridisation. an electronic campaign was launched: a questionnaire was set up for the public.

Future plans to hold in schools.

Just starting trials. Will know soon.

Local democracy week 2003 - online game for to relate council tax, finance and citizenship to young people.

Local democracy week 2003 and 2004 - I'm a councillor get me out of here. Schools ask questions of 5 councillors through a supervised

web site and at the end of the event we have a youth champion. Fun and innovative way of engaging young people in democracy.

Local plan consultation was carried out via the website - very successful and used as a good practice model.

Local strategic partnership website - community plan consultation.

Local strategic partnership worked with a group of young people to develop a web portal/survey specifically designed to engage young people with shaping the priorities for the community strategy. this enabled maximum participation by young people who were.

Meeting minutes, reports and agenda the local community website which enables community groups to host their websites.

[Enabled residents] to tailor the information they receive and the website to their postal code.

Nothing I can think of.

Nothing I can think of. One thing we have noticed is that by comparison to other areas, there is a very low up take of e-enabled services within our area due to lack of broadband.

Online consultations eg on website redesign or school reorganisation

Online postal vote registration. Part of a broader campaign involving posters / media work / direct mail to encourage people to apply for a postal vote. 600% increase in postal vote applications between may 2003 and June 2004. Most due to direct mail.

Our spice project and the swift project, all about ICT went particularly well.

Our voting for the [area] youth parliament on line, on paper, and text message voting. We did publicise it well and it was targeted at young people and text messaging is their way of communicating it is their medium so there was a good response.

Recycling to go campaign - we encouraged people for a year to give us their comments regarding the scheme.

Tall buildings consultation to inform planning policy advisory note - good mix of online and offline opportunities to engage - good level of response (1000).

Telephone registration for register of electors.

Residents can text the council any queries or questions. Used to engage with younger residents.

The community voice - we have about 2000 people that we present with questions and they respond

electronically. We work with the district councillors across the region - we all use effectively.

The consultation process on planning applications. It was an easy to use facility.

The council recently mailed out registration update forms to all of its residents. In doing so it offered a telephone number whereby respondents could call in and electronically record there was no change to their details. To date there have been 70.

The establishment of an e-citizens panel through which surveys can be completed. In addition, all emails from the council include a link to an on-line survey about the experience of contacting the council.

The local plan-we had a lot of access on to the website. We ran a special policy committee on certain topics which involved the public in decisions at an early stage and a lot of people were involved.

The on-line questions to councillors went well. We have also put detailed biographies on line about our councillors that have been successful. Electoral nominations are on-line and postal voting on-line. News press releases are on-line too.

Too early to say.

Use of on-line forums is extremely well established. Voting/ petitions by young people.

Using our self-selected email panel for piloting surveys before we go public with them.

We did a vote for whether or not we wanted an elected mayor on line and we got a 40% response rate which was much higher than we anticipated. We did research and other councils only got a 15% response rate but they didn't go on line.

We gave residents the opportunity to have the results of the last local election (May 03) either texted or e-mailed to them.

We have a choice based letting housing system that has gone live and we have had more bids on line than we have ever had through any other media channel.

We have a silver surfers club with free internet access and training for the older people so they can access council services on line. This went well because we provided the training.

We have just started a scheme, suggested by youth councillors, where we have a text number that residents - esp. children can report vandalism/repairs in play areas to the council.

We held a web cast for a particular meeting about a

significant local issue around the local airport. We had a live feed into a number of locations so people would be able to view the meeting even if they could not get into the main council chamber.

We ran a consultation on recent local plans and the airport development.

We set up a people panel and sent questions electronically to get a rapid response. We are in a very low-income area and we did not expect such a positive response.

We were one of four runners for sums testing to young people. Young people understand this and do not tend to read papers.

Websites for councillors.

We've had a great increase in website visitors. For our website content we've been judged as the best in the region.

**Q27 Please briefly outline an example, if any, of e-democracy in your local area that went particularly badly, and explain why?**

Ask the leader during 2003 local democracy week allowing citizens to submit questions to the leader of the council online. Poor response mainly due to poor marketing.

Budget consultation by on-line questionnaire – very low response rate.

E-democracy is a new venture for the council and we are experimenting with different approaches. A key challenge is getting people to visit the county council website to take part in e-democracy activities.

Issue of communication re democracy is not that good. We need to get our heads round it.

Just starting trials. Will know soon.

Just the continuous use of e-software without any regard to good practice in research, is an on-going issue, because other methods might be more relevant and better for communications and communities.

No not really stuck our head out yet.

Nothing springs to mind - we have a long way to go yet!

Online consultation forum. Difficult to manage when a 'hot political topic' is involved. Especially when questions asked on confidential matters in public.

Online focus group - insufficient participation due to budgetary restrictions on incentives

Parks online survey – data lost!

Take up for surveys has generally been lower than we would like.

Texting young people.

The council placed a number of e-kiosks around the area to enable its citizens to access information. Two of these sites were within the town hall reception and at the customer help point. Neither of these two was particularly well used.

The e-polling facility had multiple 'votes' by one person who was trying to prove that it had no validity. We are looking to put in a postcode field to help monitor/secure against this. Problems/abuse

Very few examples of e-democracy initiatives locally - no failures.

We don't use it.

We had a quick vote on the website and we created questions for it and some councillors were making

political mischief of some of the questions and we were a bit disappointed. It was abused for political purposes.

We had an online survey as part of the 2004/2005 budget consult. As with the reply slip in the local paper, we felt that the exercise wasn't useful quantitatively and we had to disregard some of the replies. We did discussion groups which were more effective.

Web casting of council meetings poor sound quality which would have required substantial investment in council chamber for a very small level of public interest.

Web casting – the technology wasn't mature enough.

Park improvement plan - we only had three responses after sending out 15,000 flyers.



**£20**

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