



# CONSTITUTION SURVEY

Winter 2023

## ABSTRACT

Result of a survey on the Constitution with Members

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## Introduction

This reports contains the results of a survey undertaken with Elected Members between 20 December 2022 and 16 January 2023.

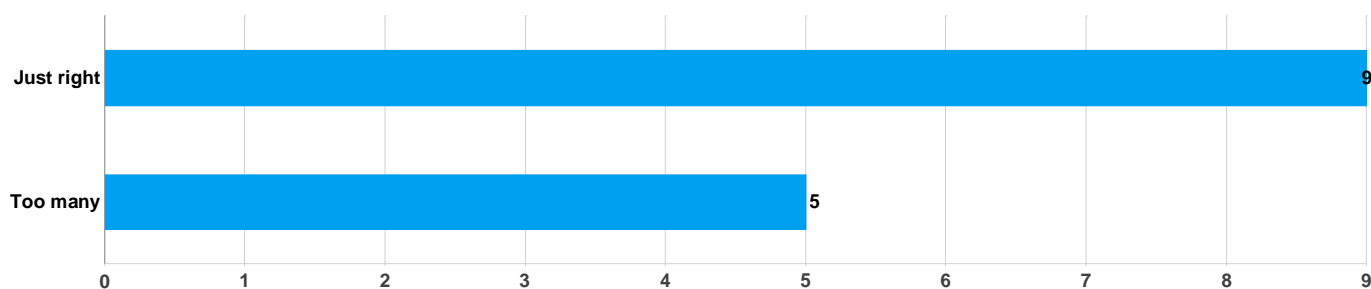
A total of 16 responses were received (including two partial responses), this represents a response rate of 29%.

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## Policy Advisory Committees

Policy Advisory Committees were added to the Executive and Scrutiny Model to undertake pre-decision scrutiny through advising the Executive on all decisions they make unless they are procedural or minor in nature.

**There are currently 4 Policy Advisory Committees (PACs), please indicate how you feel about the number of PACs.**



There were 14 responses to this question. There were no respondents that felt that 4 PACs was too few. The most common response was that the four PACs was just right.

Those that responded too many were subsequently asked what they thought the right number of PACs should be; these comments are shown in full below.

### Comments - Too many PACs

3 (taking into account an impending reduction in councillors' numbers) is too many and the work could be spread better across 3.

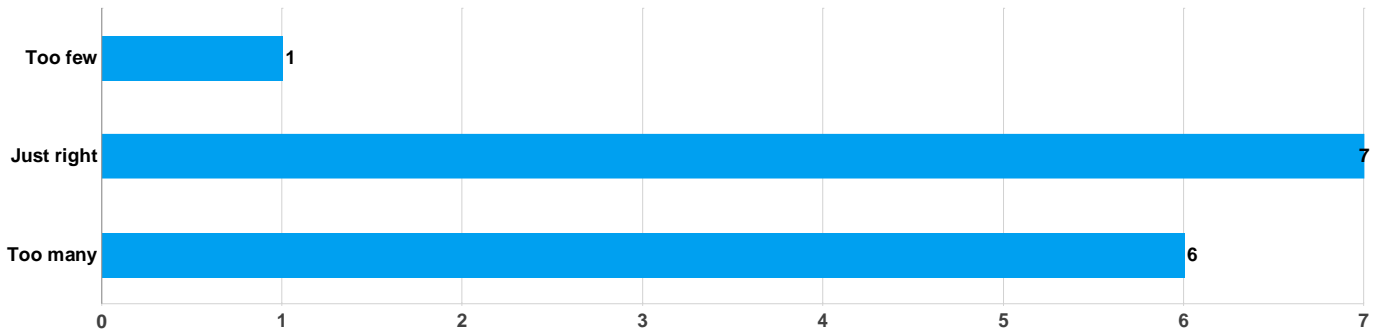
I think that they could be condensed to 3 PACs because some elements could be combined. The ERL PAC does not seem to have many items on the agenda.

Although I think there is the drive to try and make these work - I feel that there is still a sense of being listened to but not taking into account the views being put forward when making decisions. so indeed, why not remove them and just have the overview and scrutiny groups back.

Some could be merged. Currently, the business takes place in less than an hour, so combining would be better.

I think that three PAC committees would allow some consolidation meaning that members would get exposure to a wider area of council services through their membership. This would also assist with the difficulty in filling PAC positions.

**Nine Members sit on each of the PACs, please indicate how you feel about the number of committee members.**



There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response was that the nine member of each PAC was just right.

Those that responded too many or too few were subsequently asked what they thought the right number of Members on PACs should be; these comments are shown in full below.

**Comments - Too many Members on PACs**

7 members would be the right number - this would reduce the amount of committees that each member has to sit on and as the executive can't sit on the PACs in the main it would reduce the burden for other members. There always seem to be gaps on all sides at the moment.

7 whether it helps or not I don't know, but all groups seem to struggle getting full attendance, it may get worse with fewer Members

Because of the lack of business

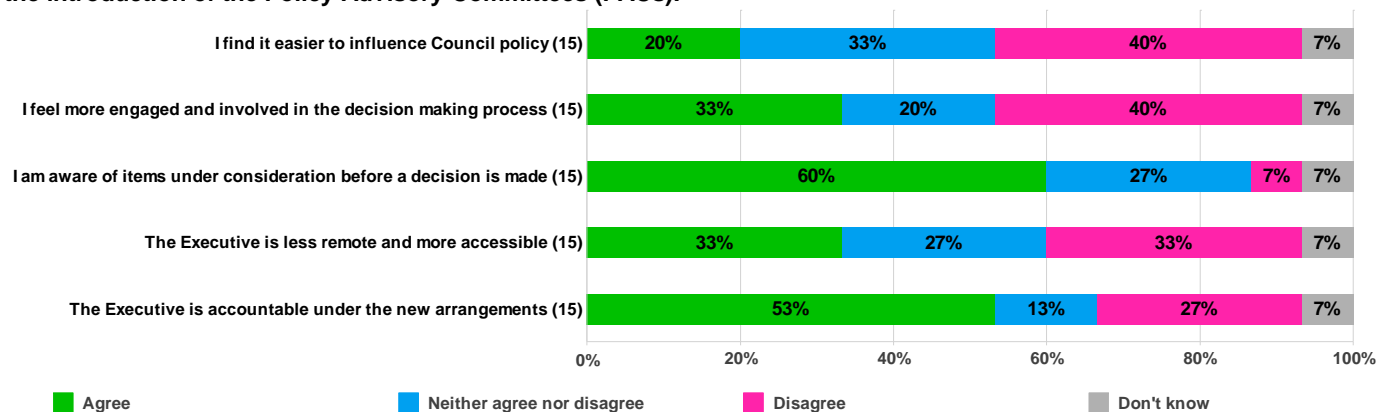
I feel this could be reduced to seven, however my feeling in this regard is not strong.

It is clear now, let alone when we reduce Members, that absence is common and Subs can be difficult to find, as only certain people DO attend.

**Comments - Too few Members on PACs**

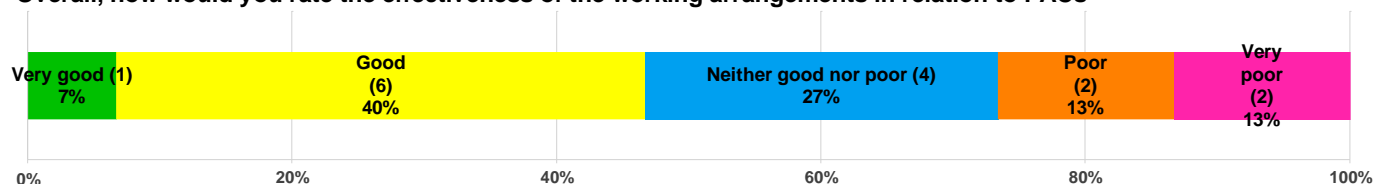
Restricts input from opposition

**To extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the introduction of the Policy Advisory Committees (PACs).**



There were 15 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive in relation to being aware of item under consideration before a decision is made with 60% responding positively to this statement and 7% responding negatively. Respondents were the most negative about it being easier to influence Council policy with 40% providing a negative response and 20% responding positively.

**Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the working arrangements in relation to PACs**



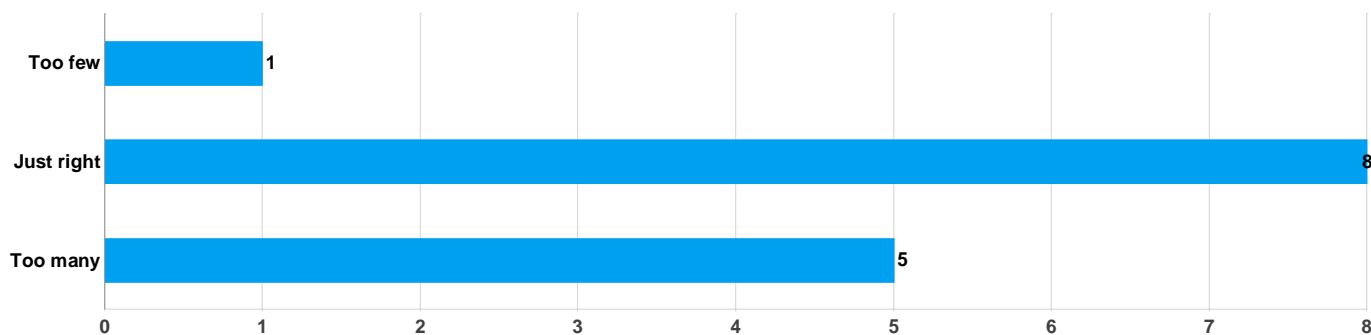
There were 15 responses to this question. Overall, 47% of respondents were positive about the effectiveness of the working arrangements in relation to the PACs and 26% were negative.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about PACs; these are shown in full below.

PACs Additional Comments
They should become O&S PACs
Much though I disliked the committee system, I feel less involved with the PAC system
The executive system is fundamentally less democratic than the committee system
Completely undemocratic decision making by a extremely small proportion of elected Councillors
I find my PAC very useful as a sounding board and it does help to influence my decisions and make them better. I do think that there isn't enough business on the ERL PAC to justify it being an entity in its own right.
I say again, it does not make for good representation from non-cabinet portfolio members, it seems much harder to influence a decision. But this is what one gets with this system.
PACs seem less efficient in driving policy than initially expected. A system of four hybrid (pre-) Scrutiny / PACs may be more effective instead of PAC + Scrutiny and would allow to spread the workload of the current Scrutiny Committee
Officers have really made it work well

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

13 Members sit on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&S), please indicate how you feel about the number of committee members.



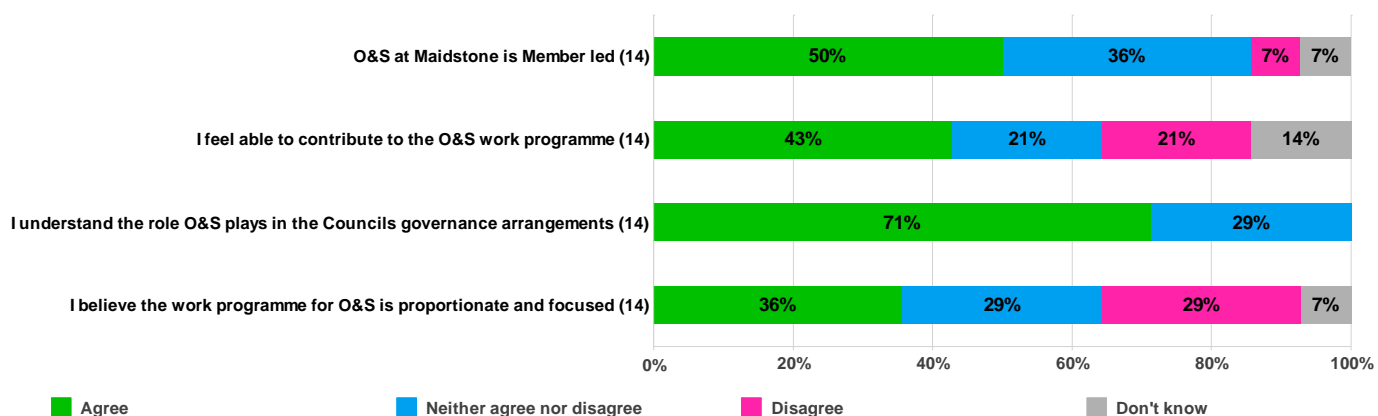
There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response was that the number of members on O&S was just right.

Those that responded too many or too few were subsequently asked what they thought the right number of Members on O&S should be; these comments are shown in full below.

Comments - Too many O&S Members
9
13 members in total but not all to sit and to have the others to rotate and maybe have a wider pool for working groups.
This large number makes the committee unwieldy.
Again, same answer as before. Attendance is difficult to ensure.

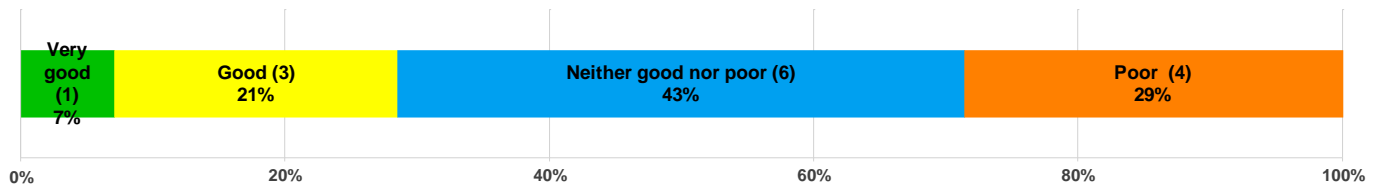
Comments - Too few O&S Members
As before, not enough space for opposition

To extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to O&S?



There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive in relation to understanding the role O&S plays in the Council's governance arrangements with 71% responding positively to this statement. Respondents were the most negative about the work programme being proportionate and focused with 29% providing a negative response and 36% responding positively.

**Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the working arrangements in relation to O&S?**



There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 43% of respondents responded neutrally when asked to rate the effectiveness of the O&S working arrangements.

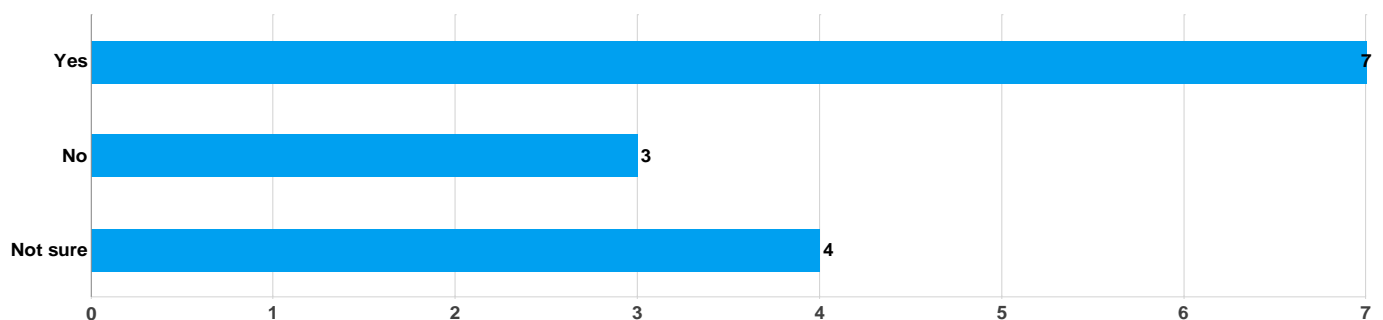
Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about O&S; these are shown in full below.

O&S Additional Comments
Do away with separate O&S and give O&S responsibility to PACs
They have too much on at the moment. I don't sit on the committee, but I have heard reports of 4 meetings a week and have seen the massive reports in the print room - I don't see how anyone can be expected to take on board that much information and I dread to think what burden it is placing on the Dem services team to produce that.
This will become much better once the system is worked on more and we get used to it.
All down to the Chair of the day. I fear that the O&S could easily become an unstructured talking shop.
Again, Officer support has been super

**Constitution Part A**

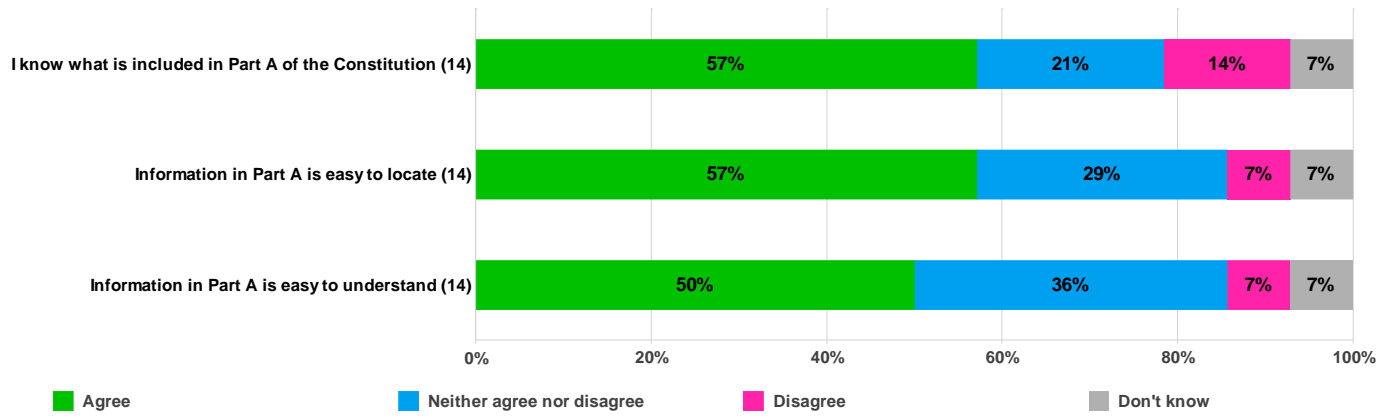
The Constitution Part A sets out the higher-level principles and core provisions of the constitution. The constitution is a hierarchical document, where there is conflict between Part A and another part of the constitution, Part A shall prevail.

**Have used used Part A of the Constitution since May 2022?**



There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response from members was that they had used Part A of the Constitution since May 2022.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Part A of the Council's Constitution?**



There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive in relation to in finding it easy to locate Part A information.

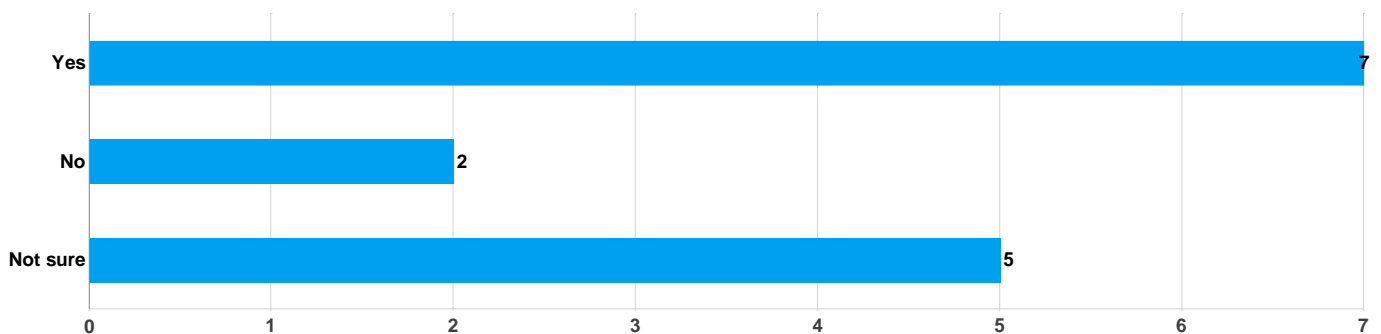
Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about Part A of the Council’s constitution; these are shown in full below.

Constitution Part A Additional Comments	
Like all documents of this type there is a lot of "noise" that detracts from the meaningful and useful sections and makes them hard to find.	
as for Q15 above, all councillors have used Part A since May 22 due to the nature of their office	

**Constitution Part B**

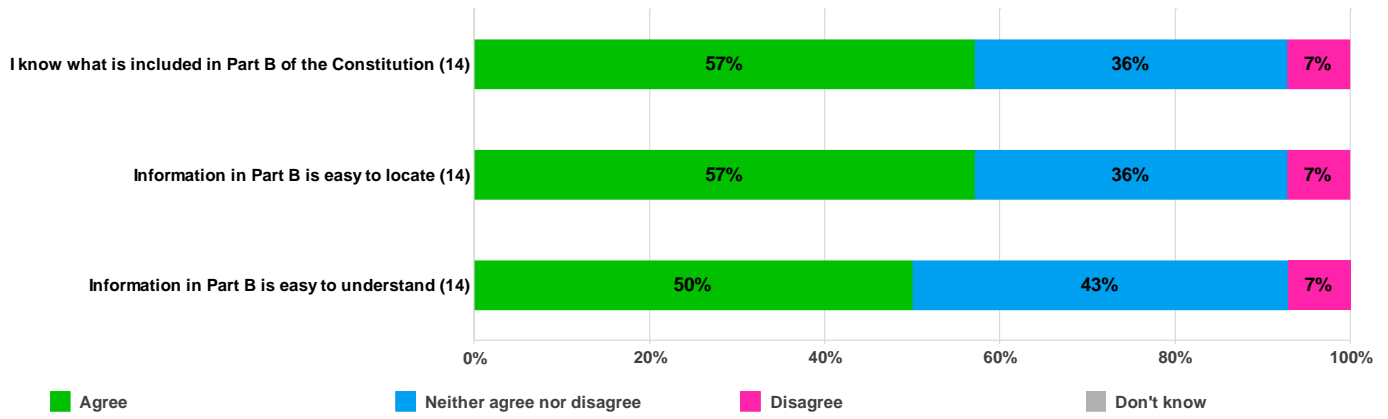
Part B of the Constitution contains provisions on responsibilities for carrying out the functions of the Council and for making decisions.

**Have used Part B of the Constitution since May 2022?**



There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response from members was that they had used Part B of the Constitution since May 2022.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Part B of the Council's Constitution?**



There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were equally positive in relation knowing what is included in Part B of the Constitution and that information in Part B is easy to locate.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about Part B of the Council’s constitution; these are shown in full below.

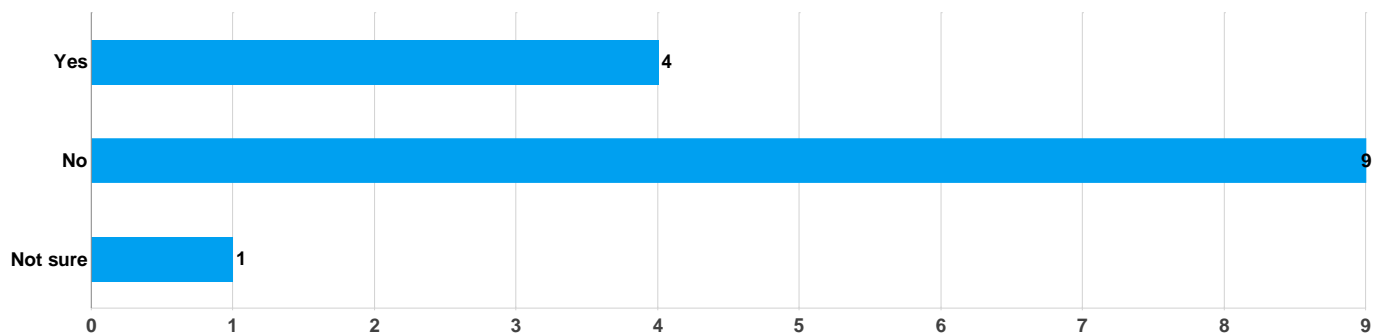
Constitution Part B Additional Comments	
as for Q18 above, all councillors have used Part A since May 22 due to the nature of their office and their participation at council and committees	

**Constitution Part C**

Part C of the constitution contains the procedure rules applicable to council, committee and executive meetings. So how the meetings will be conducted, what is included on agendas, motions and questions.

**Committees**

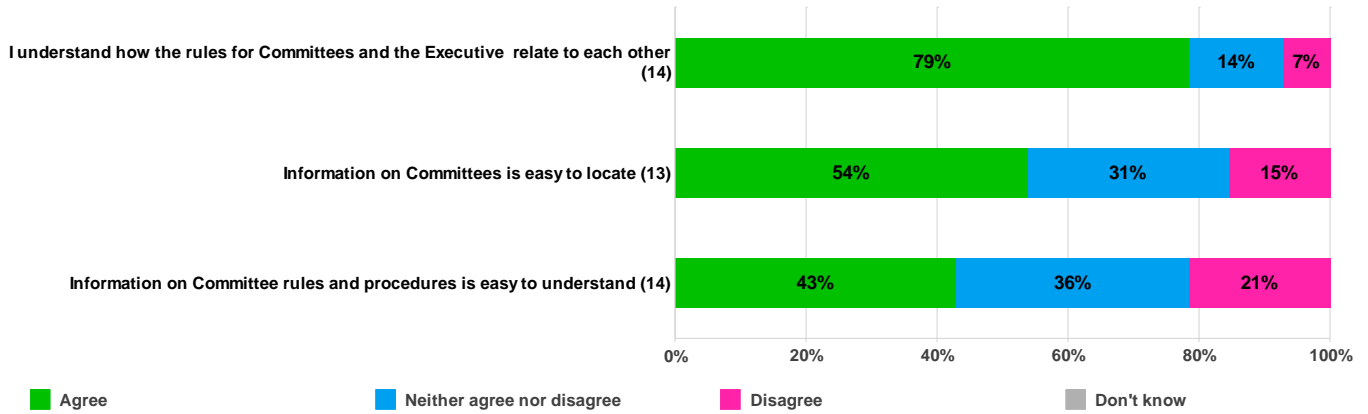
**Have you used used the rules, e.g motions on notice/questions, in relation to a Committee since May 2022?**



There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response from members was that they had not used the rules in relation to a committee since May 2022.

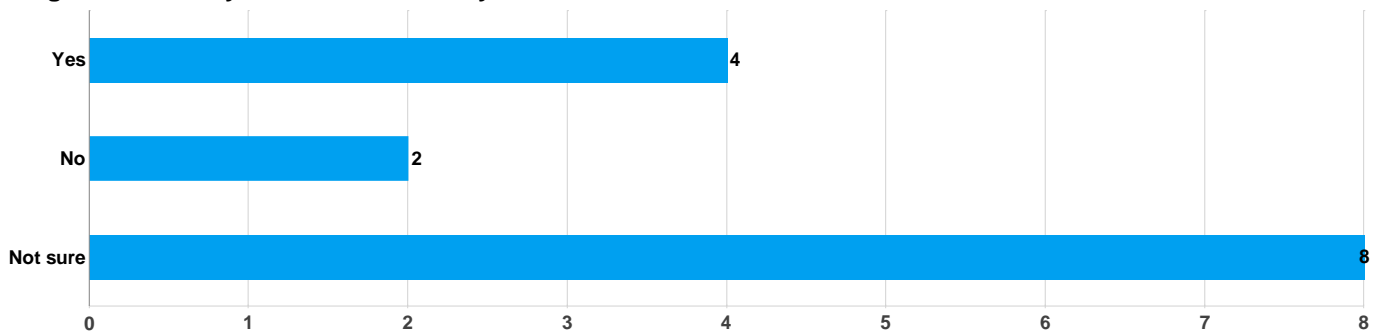


**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about information the Constitution relating to Committees?**



There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive about understanding how the rules for Committees and the Executive relate to each other.

**Do you think there should be specific rules for how decisions that have been called-in should be facilitated when being considered by Overview & Scrutiny?**

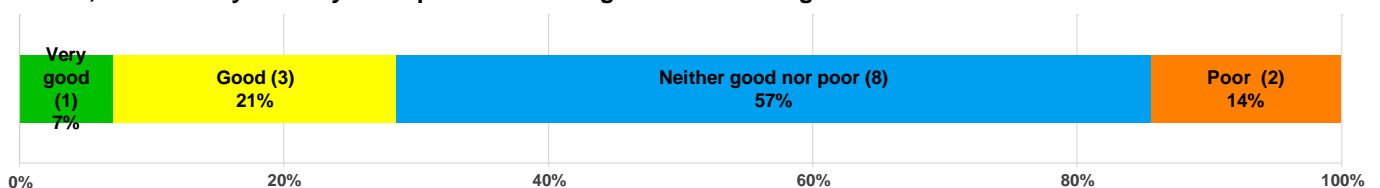


There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response from members they were not sure if there should be specific rules for how decisions that have been called-in should be facilitated when being considered by O&S.

Those that responded that there should be specific rules for how decisions that have been called-in should be facilities when being considered by O&S were asked what rules they felt should be included, these comments are shown in full below.

Specific Rules for O&S Comments
I think they should timetable how they will work through the call-in and work with the exec to achieve this attendance.
I think it should be made clear when the decision is made / published. That it can be called in and a date should be shown in the minutes when they have to comply with the call-in rules.
At present there is no need for additional rules as many chapters in Part C already deal with call-in rules to O&S (Chapter 6), so I am not quite sure where this question aims at

**Overall, how would you rate your experience of using the rules relating to Committees?**



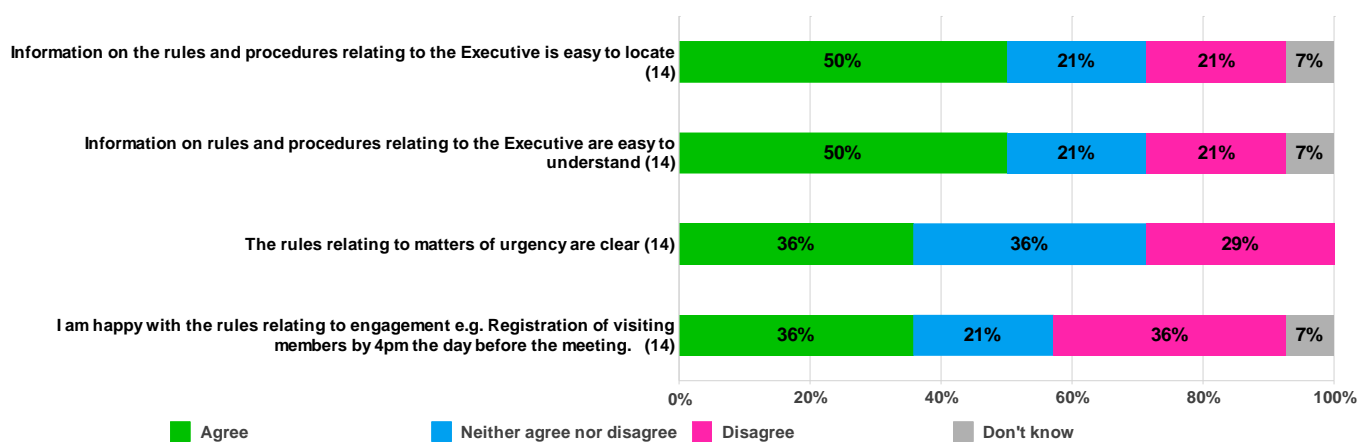
There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 57% of respondents responded neutrally when asked to rate their experience of using the rules relating to Committees.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about procedures and rules for Committees; these are shown in full below.

Procedures & Rules for Committees Additional Comments
Whilst I recognise that it takes time to learn a new constitution in practise our current version requires interactive familiarity of the interplay of too many sections on single points of order.
C5 1.1.5 mentions clinical commissioning groups however these were abolished before the constitution was agreed. This needs to be replaced with ICB, ICB or HCP.
The petitions rules are absolutely ludicrous. A petition for a planning application that ends up at full council with over 100 signatures. These need looking at. Also, overall it is too complicated and needs simplifying - I am not confident using it.

## Executive

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about information in the Constitution relating to the Executive?



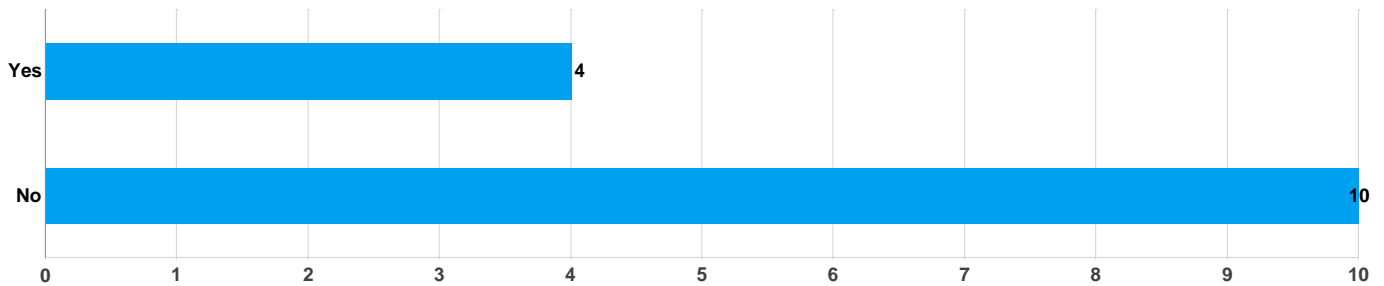
There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive being able to locate information on rules and procedures relating to the Executive. They were least positive about the rules for engagement.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about procedures and rules for the Executive; these are shown in full below.

Procedures & Rules for the Executive Additional Comments
New councillors should be given an executive summary of the committee procedures, rules and operations rather than having to find out for themselves via the website or by watching others.
I think they should be able to do this even during the meeting itself as the visiting member thinks of a reason for the need to engage.
it would be for the opposition parties to elaborate on this
It would be useful for the meeting chairman to have discretion regarding the registration rule.

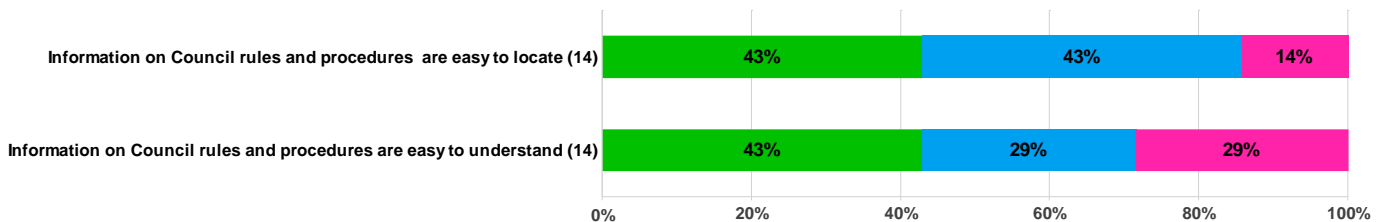
## Council

Have you used the rules e.g. motions on notice/questions for Council, since May 2022?



There were 14 responses to this question. The most common response from members they had not used the rules for Council since May 2022.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about information in the Constitution relating?



There were 14 responses to these questions. Respondents were most positive being able to locate information on rules and procedures relating to the Council.

Overall, how would you rate your experience of using the rules and procedures relating to Council?

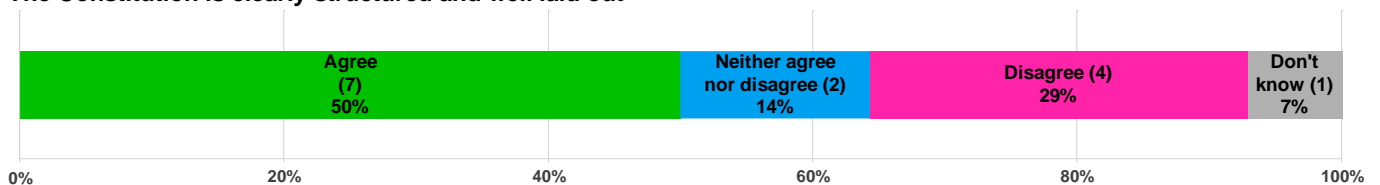


There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 64% of respondents responded neutrally when asked to rate their experience of using the rules relating to Council.

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## General Constitution

The Constitution is clearly structured and well laid out



There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 50% of respondents felt that the Constitution was clearly structured and well laid out.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

The Constitution is clearly structured and well laid out that - Disagree Comments
Rewrite
Plain English and everything to do with an item should be in the same section or referenced through clearly
It is too long and is confusing and cumbersome - its a struggle to follow and use effectively.

#### Information is easy to find in the Constitution

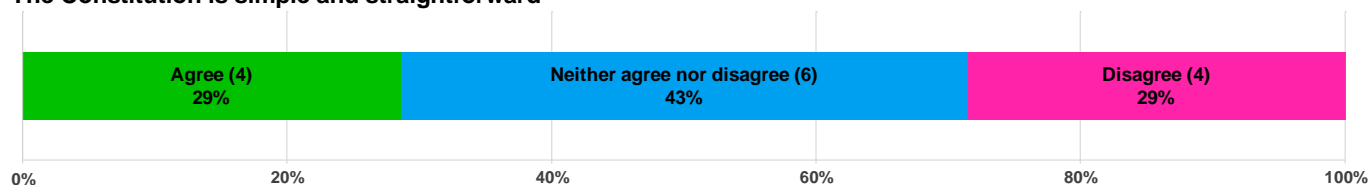


There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 57% of respondents felt that it was easy to find information in the Constitution.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

Information is easy to find in the Constitution - Disagree Comments
because of interplay of multiple sections on a single point of order
Colour coding maybe?
Set it out better - working flow - system and training of its use to all members needed. Streamline it.

#### The Constitution is simple and straightforward

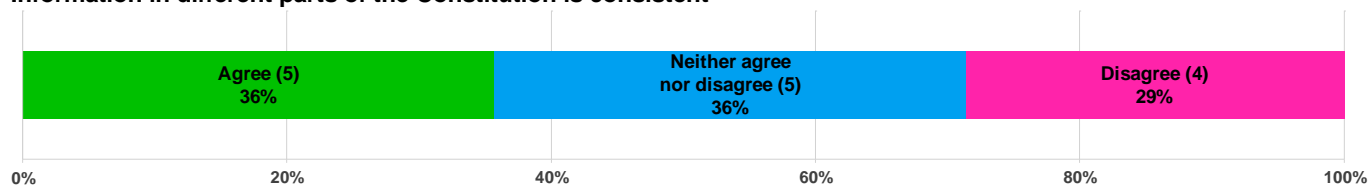


There were 14 responses to this question. An equal proportion agreed and disagreed that the Constitution is simple and straightforward.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

The Constitution is simple and straightforward - Disagree Comments
rewrite
Cutting down on the word count

#### Information in different parts of the Constitution is consistent

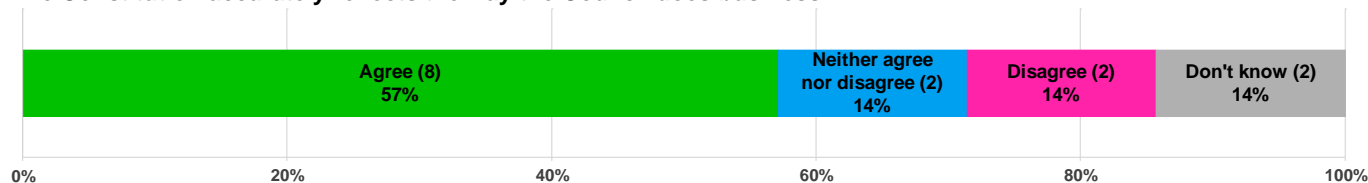


There were 14 responses to this question. There was no general agreement in how Members responded to this question.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

Information in different parts of the Constitution is consistent - Disagree Comments
Rewrite
It should all link together and be referenced through. Some longer sections should be shortened.
Better cross ref and checking before publishing.

#### The Constitution accurately reflects the way the Council does business

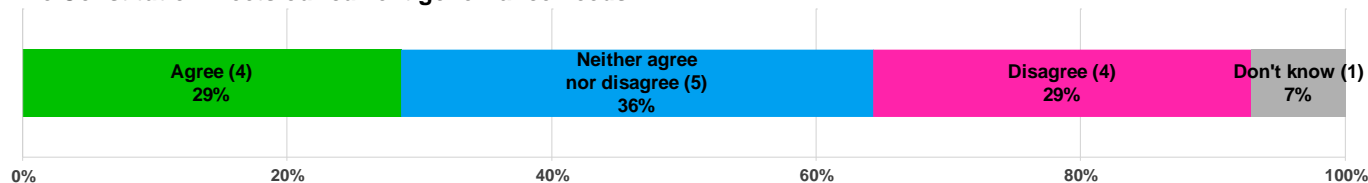


There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 57% of respondents felt that the Constitution accurately reflects the way the Council does business.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

The Constitution accurately reflects the way the Council does business
We try to be transparent and logical in how we understand and find was to get things done.

#### The Constitution meets our current governance needs

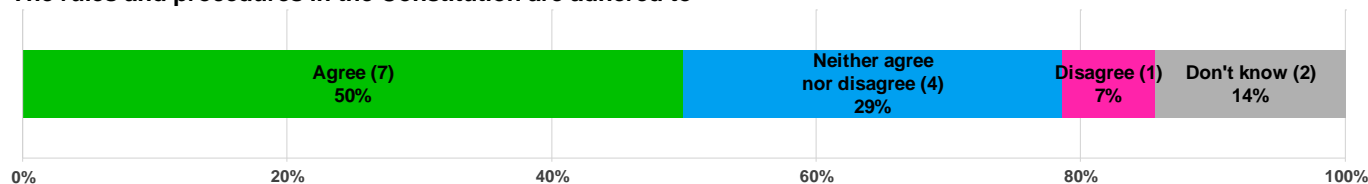


There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 36% of respondents answered neutrally when asked if the Constitution meets our current governance needs.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; these are shown in full below.

The Constitution meets our current governance needs
maybe just about meets current need but needs revision for reduced council size
A return to the committee system
Maybe the governance needs tweaking.

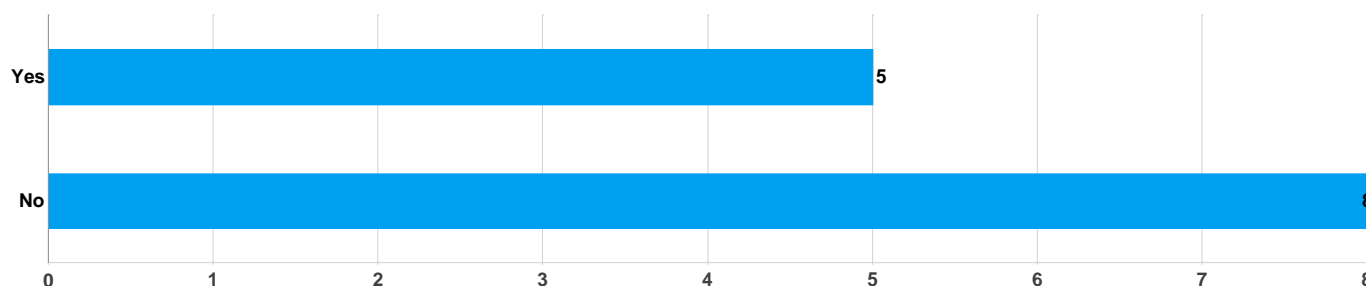
#### The rules and procedures in the Constitution are adhered to



There were 14 responses to this question. Overall, 50% of respondents felt that the rules and procedures in the Constitution are adhered to.

Respondents that's disagreed where provided with the opportunity to provide further comment; no additional comment was provided.

### Where you aware that there is a guide to the Council's Constitution?



There were 13 responses to this question. The most common response from members was that they did not know there is a guide to the Council's Constitution.

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### Additional Comments

Additional Comments
We need this sorted out so it works properly from 2024.
As for Q41 I am not aware of any guide post ratification, obviously there were plenty of briefings and flow charts passed around before ratification. This survey asked some strange questions, as I noted above. A better approach would be to collate issues which members experienced with the constitution and have those issues presented for comment by all members.
There needs to be an "emergency" or special needs provision to cancel a meeting WITHOUT substantial notice subject to Chairs/Leader/Cabinet agreement. Its foolhardy to have a meeting in THICK SNOW AND ICE only to note absence and then cancel.