Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK

Second Report of the Democracy in the UK after Brexit Project

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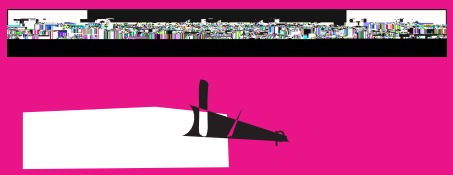
UK AFTER BREXIT

April 2022



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This report was written by Alan Renwick, Kaela Scott, Meg Russell, James Cleaver, and Frances Osborne.

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We believe that the UK public as a whole has to become more engaged with the

We believe that the public should be able to trust their elected representative to behave honestly and selþessly. While the political system is intended to have mechanisms in place to police this, we believe that they are not working well and that greater involvement of independent regulators is needed.

Supported by 95%

Members saw existing political and regulatory mechanisms for upholding high ethical standards in public life as inadequate, and therefore advocated stronger independent regulators. Their recommendations called for:

- high standards of behaviour from MPs and ministers
- a greater role for independent regulators, with courts involved only if illegality is suspected
- greater clarity and consistency of sanctions for breaching a code of conduct, and implementation of sanctions proposed by an independent regulator
- introducing appropriate sanctions for lying to parliament.

We believe that there is an important role for the courts to play in limiting the laws that can be passed by government when they are seen to challenge basic rights and core democratic principles.

Supported by 92%

Members advocated expanded powers for the courts, but also cautioned against excessive use of these powers. Recommendations said that:

- courts should gain the power to overturn laws that threaten human rights or basic democratic features
- basic features of democracy should be difýcult to alter
- courts should not overuse their powers to challenge laws passed by parliament
- the courts' ability to scrutinise secondary legislation should be maintained
- there should be no fast-track procedure to overturn how courts interpret the law.

- Professor Catherine Barnard (Professor of European & Employment Law, University of Cambridge; Deputy Director, UK in a Changing Europe)
- Baroness (Shami) Chakrabarti (Labour peer; former Shadow Attorney General; former Director of Liberty)
- Joanna Cherry QC MP (SNP MP for Edinburgh South West; former SNP Shadow Home Secretary)
- Professor Sir John Curtice (Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde; Senior Research Fellow,

The table below shows the make-up of the Assembly in comparison with the UK voting age population as a whole. It shows data both for the Assemblyîs original 74 members and for the ýnal 67 who completed the sixth weekend.

The Assembly was closely representative of the population across all criteria. It can therefore meaningfully be treated as a microcosm of the UK as a whole.

Some groups were, however, somewhat underrepresented, and several discrepancies were accentuated when some members had to drop out. Notably, people with least formal education, non-voters, and those who did not agree that ócitizens should follow political debates closely themselvesî were initially slightly underrepresented, and subsequently more likely to drop out. The deviations were not large. Still, it will be useful to consider further how deliberative processes can best recruit and retain individuals from these groups. These groups are, of course, even more underrepresented in elected institutions than in the Assembly: this is a problem that is far from affecting deliberative processes alone.

The Assembly met over six weekends between September and December 2021.

The meetings took place online, via the video conferencing platform Zoom. Though public health measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic did not at the time prevent in-person meetings, a face-to-face assembly was not feasible. Many potential participants would not have been willing to travel across the country and gather for long periods in a room with dozens of others, so recruiting a representative sample would likely have been impossible. Furthermore, changes to the Covid situation might at any time have necessitated a shift online ï as indeed would have been required for the ýnal weekend, following the rise of the Omicron variant.

This was not the ýrst citizensû assembly to meet online. When the Covid pandemic ýrst hit, two major ongoing assemblies – Climate Assembly UK and the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland – had to switch to online operation. Since then, many assemblies and other deliberative processes have unfolded wholly online. There are undoubted downsides to online meetings: social time during breaks and meals is lost; connection problems can hamper conversation; and people become tired more quickly. There are also advantages: some who would not join an in-person assembly do take part; travel time for members and witnesses is reduced or eliminated.

The six weekends were structured into three phases, as outlined in the diagram below. Over the ýrst two

The Assembly met for three sessions over each weekend:

- Saturday morning: 10:00–12:30
- Saturday afternoon: 14:00–16:30
- Sunday: 10:00–12:30

Each weekend began with introductions from the Lead Facilitator, Kaela Scott, and the Project Lead, Alan Renwick. Members moved to facilitated Zoom breakout rooms to meet the others in the group they would be working with that day or that weekend. There were 10 breakout groups at each weekend, each with 6–7 participants. Members were allocated to breakout groups to ensure a distribution of age, gender, and political attitudes within each group. Over the course of the Assembly, rotation of groups enabled most members to meet and interact with each other.

Saturday sessions typically consisted of talks from expert witnesses interspersed with small-group discussions when members could reþect on what they had heard and put questions to the speakers. Some talks, particularly in the mornings, sought to set out in balanced terms how the system works and what questions are raised about it. In other talks, particularly in the afternoons, speakers advocated speciýc points of view. Sunday sessions were mostly devoted to deliberation among the members themselves.

Emerging ideas were fed back from the breakout groups throughout the process. These included ideas on basic principles and speciýc recommendations. During phase 2, preliminary polls were also conducted to gauge how members' thinking was developing in response to a variety of questions. As further explained below, between Weekends 5 and 6, the Assembly organisers collated the draft recommendations and merged similar recommendations. For each area of recommendations, an overarching resolution was drafted. Members were polled on which of the draft resolutions and recommendations they wanted to go forward for ýnal reýnement and voting. Final reýnement took place at Weekend 6, where members also developed statements summing up their feelings about how democracy is working in the UK today.

It is useful to reþect on the context within which the Assembly took place. The most signiýcant events in the backdrop to the Assembly were Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the Assembly was held as part of a research project called *Democracy in the UK after Brexit*, we as organisers did not emphasise Brexit in presentations to members. That was because we wanted members to be able to evaluate options on their own merits, not through the lens of their side of the Brexit debate. Members were, of course, welcome to draw on Brexit in their own contributions, and many often did so.

In terms of immediate context, the Assembly began with limited Covid-19 restrictions in place across the UK, but the spread of the Omicron variant meant that measures were being put in place again as the Assembly concluded.[7]

23–24 October

Weekend 3 examined the question, ‘Where should the balance of power lie between government and parliament?’.

- Introduction to how government and parliament work – talks by (former senior parliamentary ofýcial in the House of Commons and Senedd), (senior ofýcial in the House of Commons), (Institute for Government and UK in a Changing Europe), and (Constitution Unit, UCL), interspersed with small-group discussions

- Outline of key trade-offs in the relationship between government and parliament – talk by

13–14 November

Weekend 4 examined the question, ‹How should members of the public be involved in decision-making?›.

The main questions under consideration at Weekend 4.

27–28 November

Weekend 5 focused on upholding rules and standards through political, regulatory, and legal mechanisms. It had two core questions: ‘How should standards of ethical behaviour be upheld?’ and ‘To what extent should government and parliament be subject to legal limits?’.

- Introduction to mechanisms of scrutiny and accountability – talks by (Constitution Unit, UCL), (Committee on Standards in Public Life), and (University of Strathclyde), interspersed with small-group discussions

- ‘What do you see as the key benefits and risks of governments and parliaments being subject to regulatory or legal limits?’ – initial small-group discussion
- ‘How should rules and standards be upheld?’ – panel discussion with (University of Oxford and Judicial Power Project), (University of Cambridge and UK in a Changing Europe), and (Institute for Government and UK in a Changing Europe), chaired by

- Small-group discussion, followed by plenary feedback, on whether government, parliament, Pu Tm(P8ty)TjET a Changing Europe), chaired by

Many members expressed a concern that it had become a norm in politics to break rules, and that this has resulted in an unfair situation of ‘one rule for them and another for everybody else’. Here members

11. An informed and educated voter base

15. A commitment from elected governments to deliver on their manifesto

… so that the promises made to those that voted for them are delivered.

Agreed by 80%

Many members expressed the view that, once elected, governments often appear to neglect promises made in their manifestos and fail to deliver on the things that the public elected them to do. This was seen as not only disappointing voters, but also undermining trust in the democratic system. In some discussions relating to this principle in later meetings, members also said that the need for scrutiny and debate should not be used as a stalling tct ic to prevent government delivering on its programme of work.

16. No unelected bodies making poli ical / policy decisions

… so that decisions are made by representatives appointed by the people to enact their views (e.g., not ofýcials or the House of Lords), but acknowledging there is a role for the courts to keep them in check.

Agreed by 70%

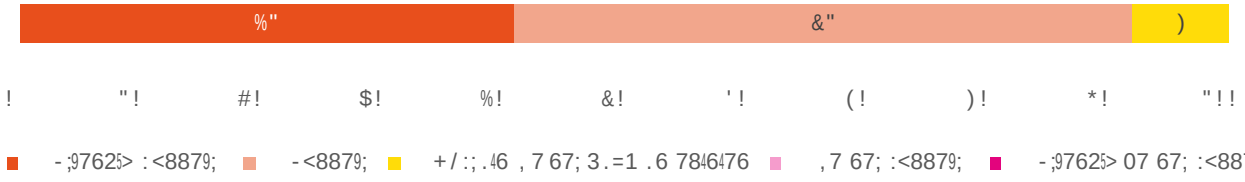
Overall, and patifcularly at the outset of the meetings, members expressed a strong sense that decisions in a representative democracy should be made by elected MPs, who are delegated that authority by the public. There was a clear view that unelected bodies that may be unrepresentative or biased towards the views of the already powerful (the House of Lords was speciýcally mentioned) lack the legitimacy to make poli ical decisions. Support for this principle weakened as the Assembly continued, however, as members considered the importance of expert advice, direct ci izen patifcipation, independent regulators, and judges. The text of the original principle was amended by members in Weekend 5 to that displayed above, to acknowledge speciýcally the role of the courts. In the ýnal vote, the principle was still backed by a substantial majority of Assembly members, but the level of support was much the lowest across all the principles.

The ýrst concrete theme explored by the Assembly focused on where the balance of power should lie between government and parliament. The following resolution was agreed:

We believe that parliament needs to be able to play a stronger role in scrutinising the actions of government. Collectively, it represents the voice of the electorate as a

Recommendation 1.9: More ýxed time needs to be reserved in the parliamentary schedule to ensure that matters such as private members' bills and public petitions can be debated and decided, without being ótalked outô. But this should be balanced against the right of government to have the time to deliver on what they were elected to do.

Supported by 92%



Recommendations 1.7, 1.8, and 1.9 all relate to the importance the members placed on backbench and opposition MPs being able to get issues onto the parliamentary agenda for debate and decision. Members overwhelmingly agreed that this was necessary to enable matters that may be important to the public, or particular MPs or constituencies, to receive meaningful parliamentary attention.

> *Every MP should be heard as they have been selected by their constituency – they represent people so they need to be listened to.*

Recommendation 1.7 focuses on the general principle that the House of Commons as a whole should inþuence what it discusses, and goes further, to demand that debates are resolved with a decision that can be acted on. Members were concerned that government exerts too much control at present, and that other ways for backbench and opposition MPs to inþuence what is discussed are either too limited or lacking in force.

Many members were disappointed and bewildered in particular at the random way that decisions are made regarding which private members' bills are allocated time for debate. They were widely appalled at the seemingly all-too-common practice of intentionally ótalking outô these proposals, leaving no time for a vote or decision. Recommendation 1.8 seeks to address this, while recognising the need to avoid ótime-wasting' debates on trivial or irrelevant proposals, by calling for the decision on which bills are debated to be made by a cross-party parliamentary committee.[14] As mentioned by one of the expert witnesses, a similar recommendation had previously been made by the House of Commons Procedure Committee, though never acted upon.[15] In their discussions, members further noted that these decisions should be made on the basis of the merit of the proposal, public interest and investment in the issue, and the likelihood of impact.

Over the course of the Assembly, members learned that, at present, limited time is allocated in parliament for non-government business. This, combined with the practice of ótalking outô and debates not resulting in an outcome, left many deeply dissatisýed with the current situation. Recommendation 1.9 therefore builds on their ambition that matters introduced to the parliamentary agenda from outside government should be given due consideration.[16] There were also suggestions made by members that it should be the Speaker's role to ensure that any additional time is managed effectively, to make the best use of this limited parliamentary opportunity.

14 In the early stages of their deliberations, many members argued that a representative panel of citizens (like a citizens' jury) should fulýl this role. Ultimately, however, members concluded that this was not particularly viable given the number of bills initiated, and also because this should be a responsibility for parliament itself. Members therefore decided not to put this proposal to a vote.

15 House of Commons Procedure Committee, *Private Members' Bills: Third Report of Session 2015-16* (London: House of Commons, 2016).

16 Members also included reference to debates initiated by petitions in this recommendation, to support their further recommendations regarding the petitions process, presented below in association with Resolution 3.

The Assembly's second area of focus related to the roles that members of the public can play to ensure that the UK's representative system delivers 'good' democracy for people in the UK.

Members began by examining the public's roles and responsibilities in the traditional representative democratic system. They considered a variety of ways in which people's ability to participate effectively in that system could be strengthened.

Members also examined the roles that a variety of alternative mechanisms could, or should, play:

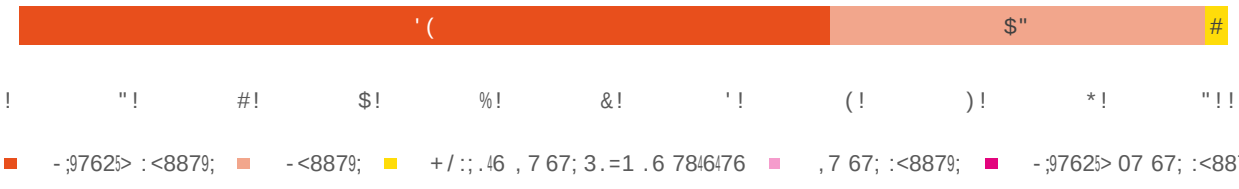
1. Public petitions to parliament, enabling the public to influence the parliamentary agenda
2. Referendums, giving decision-making powers on specific issues directly to voters
3. Deliberative processes like citizens' assemblies, creating a formal route for members of the public to participate in policymaking.

Overall, there was significant support for strengthening the public's role, particularly to influence policy and decisions between elections. The members' conclusions and recommendations regarding these approaches are presented below.

Following discussions about opportunities for and barriers to public involvement with the main institutions of the representative system, members voted on two resolutions to encapsulate their emerging conclusions:

We believe that the UK public as a whole has to become more engaged with the existing opportunities to influence our representative system (voting, contacting MPs, supporting/joining political parties or campaign groups etc.) but we don't think that will happen unless people have more reason to believe that they can make a difference.

Supported by 98%



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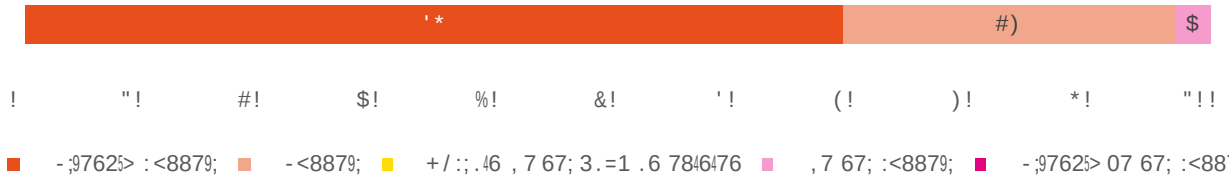
We believe that a good democracy in the UK needs voters who are engaged, well-informed and able to consider other points of view and opposing arguments in a constructive way.

Supported by 97%



Members engaged with two key questions when considering what was needed to ensure that the formal //MC0045.0

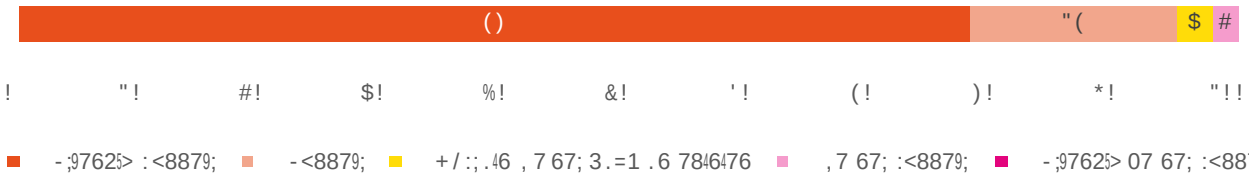
members particularly saw in their use of social media, most members argued that they needed to go

Recommendation 2.4: Information on what is happening in parliament and government should be freely available to all in a form that is concise, factual, accessible, and unbiased. More work is needed so that people know where to look, and can quickly ýnd the information they want.

Supported by 95%

Recommendation 2.6: To allow for effective public participation in political debate and scrutiny, freedom of speech and the right to protest need to be protected.

Supported by 95%



Recommendation 2.6 reþects concerns raised by members repeatedly throughout the process, that the current government was seeking to constrain certain basic democratic rights. It ties back to the importance members placed on freedom of thought and speech in Principle 2. Members argued that the ability to freely express political views and demonstrate against ôbadô decisions was essential to a good democratic system, and was a route for people to have inþuence and hold governments to account. Despite calling for greater media regulation in Recommendation 2.5, members were also explicit in their discussion ercom0 to the ,edom of not aogardeml. I

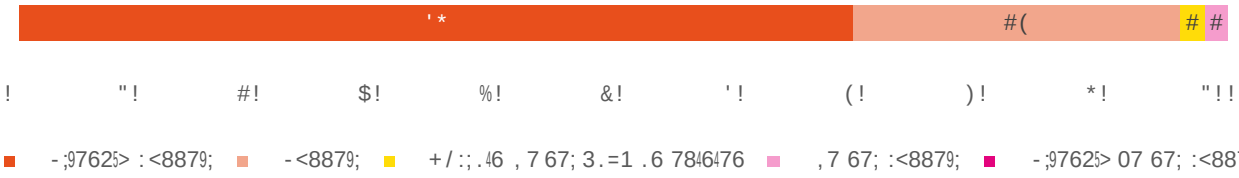
vote that can be acted on. Members also expected that, if a proposition was rejected following the debate, the government should have to make a further statement explaining its position.

When members learned from questioning the expert presenters that the minimum number of MPs required for a debate was three, they were alternatively shocked or dismayed. Recommendation 3.3 explicitly seeks a guarantee that, when a promised parliamentary debate occurs, a substantial number of

The referendums on European Union membership and Scottish independence were clearly at the forefront of members' minds when developing this recommendation. Notes from their discussions highlight the frustrations felt by those on both sides of these debates that there were too many unanswered and unanswerable questions about the processes and their consequences when they were asked to vote. The Assembly concluded that referendums are most valuable when the impacts of a decision are clear and set out in advance, so people can make a better informed choice, as was the case in the 2011 Alternative Vote referendum.

Recommendation 4.3: In order to generate the trust needed for genuine, free and authentic conversations, involvement and outcomes, when a referendum is called there should be an impartial, non-political body (like the Electoral Commission) that is responsible for providing the public with clear, unbiased, factual information that they can use to understand the issues involved.

Supported by 96%



Related to the concerns highlighted above in regard to Recommendation 4.2, members focused on what they saw as a need for ofýcially produced factual information about what a decision either way would mean. Reþecting again on their own experiences of the Brexit and Scottish independence referendum campaigns, members expressed concerns about how much ópinô and misinformation was produced by

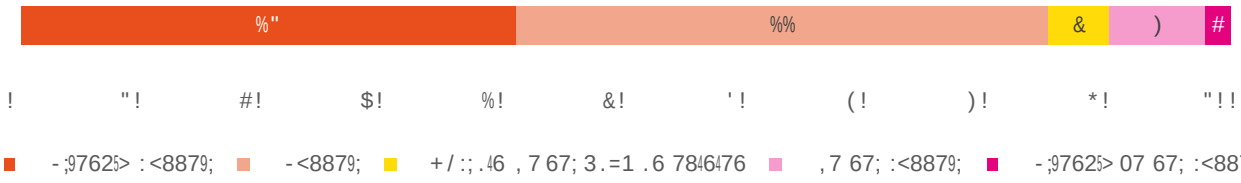
The ýrst positive aspect of processes like citizensû assemblies that the members highlighted was the requirement for participants to be broadly representative of the wider population. They recognised this diversity in the assembly that they were part of and valued what it added to their own deliberations. By contrast, they reþected that most other existing avenues for direct public voice ï such as consultations, public meetings, and demonstrations – typically give government the perspectives for the most part only of already engaged segments of the population.

> *We are all so different and coming from different places – but all focused on how to make things better once we got into it. It made it hard but exciting. This way you get a real range of the population involved and people learn from each other.*

Members also noted that representative polling data is often used to give decision-makers information on public attitudes. Members were keen to see deliberative processes used to replace or complement such evidence because of the different type of insight that they can offer.

Recommendation 5.2: The results of a deliberative process like a citizens' assembly should provide advice to decision makers but should not be binding, as that would be undemocratic since the members are not elected.

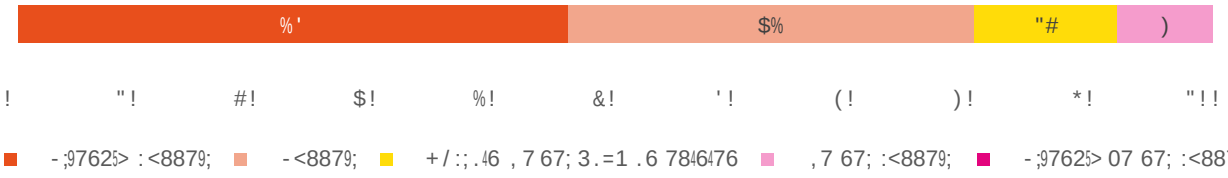
Supported by 85%



Recommendation 5.3: The results of deliberative processes like citizens' assemblies that are

Recommendation 5.4: Citizens' assemblies or citizens' juries should be convened to advise on and sense-check new laws proposed by the government that are outside their manifesto commitments, as a formal mechanism of public scrutiny of new proposals. Their ýndings should be published.

Supported by 80%



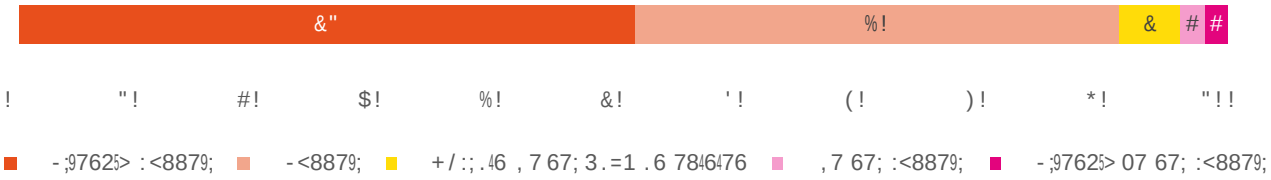
One speciýc use of deliberative processes that members prioritised in their recommendations was to provide a formal mechanism of direct public scrutiny for new laws proposed by governments that were outside the platform on which they were elected. This recommendation aligns closely with the scrutiny called for in Recommendation 1.6 and members' broader view that there should be limits on what an elected government can do without wider engagement and consultation.

In calling for deliberative processes to be convened in such cases, members were keen to ensure that governments were provided with a robust public assessment of proposals, alongside greater parliamentary scrutiny than at present.

> *A great way of involving people in an ongoing way in the formal political structure. Bringing in a group like this one [would be a] great way of sense checking before new laws are made that impact people at a local or personal level that no one has realised before.*

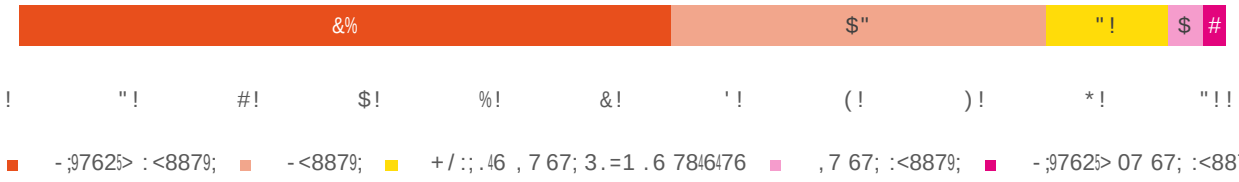
Recommendation 5.5: Deliberative processes should be used to enhance local as well as national decision-making, so that decisions are made that are informed by what local people want.

Supported by 91%



Recommendation 5.6: MPs should hold locally based deliberative processes with a cross-section of their constituency before voting on controversial policy issues so that they can better understand the concerns of their electorate.

Supported by 85%



Recommendations 5.5 and 5.6 focus on increasing the use of deliberative processes in both local and national decision-making. This ties back to the expectations expressed in the recommendations associated with Resolution 1, that MPs should more actively and visibly represent the views of their constituencies. These recommendations advocate a vehicle to help them achieve this.

> *Regeneration projects, socially impactful issues that affect the community are the types of issues that should be discussed and decided upon through these types of processes [because] govt doesn't always understand local areas and is very London-centric.*

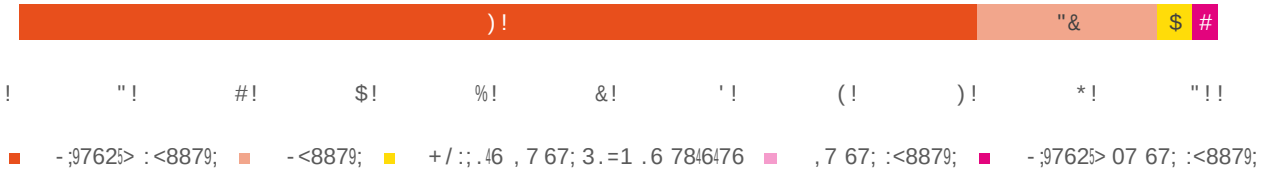
Both recommendations emphasise the need for a local focus, as members tended to believe that this was where the impacts of government policies were most felt. They called for greater use of local deliberative processes to enable decision-makers to better understand the local impacts and implications of national policies.

While valuing the demographic representativeness of a citizens' assembly, members recognised that this would not be practical in all circumstances. They thus considered the wording in Recommendation 5.6 carefully. The notes from members discussions show that, in referring to a cross-section of the constituency, they wanted to prioritise the active engagement of a wider demographic than may typically approach an MP, while recognising practical limitations. Therefore, the intention behind this recommendation was twofold: to encourage active outreach to expose MPs to a wider range of their constituents' views than might normally occur, helping to realise Principle 6 about fair representation; and

Members of the Assembly expected high ethical standards of behaviour to be maintained by their elected representatives. After consideration of what the Nolan Principles[19] should demonstrate in practice, there was broad agreement that existing regulatory arrangements were insufýcient. That led to the following resolution, which received the highest level of ópowerfulô support of all the Assemblyôs eight resolutions:

We believe that the public should be able to trust their elected representative to behave honestly and selþessly. While the political system is intended to have mechanisms in place to police this, we believe that they are not working well and that greater involvement of independent regulators is needed.

Supported by 95%



You are serving the citizens – your own needs have to be set aside and you need to act on behalf of those who have given their voices to you.

The Assembly met at a time of widespread concerns over insufýcient responsibility, integrity and honesty among politicians, arising from allegations that ministers or other MPs had broken Covid-19 restrictions, lied in parliament, or bullied staff. As presented above, the need for more honesty in politics was the most widely agreed principle among members. There was also a perception that politicians were able to óget away' with these behaviours, despite conclusions from regulatory bodies that their actions had overstepped the boundaries of what should be expected from those in public life. Members therefore felt that upholding appropriate standards of behaviour required stronger powers for regulators.

Peer pressure and the 'culture' of parliamentary processes, along with

Recommendation 6.1: The public should be able to expect members of parliament to conduct themselves ethically in their work and that regulators will investigate conduct that appears dishonest or self-interested, or lacks integrity.

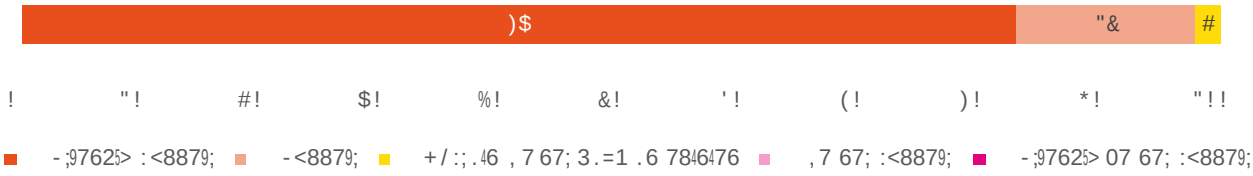
Supported by 96%

recommendations closely align with the wishes of members set out in Principles 3 and 4, which together emphasise the need for more consistently applied penalties and greater accountability.

> *Parliament needs to demonstrate leadership by enacting rules to close 'loopholes' that allow the privileged and rich to 'game the system' and avoid what the 'ordinary person' can't avoid - needs legislative change and enforcement.*

Recommendation 6.4: Lying or intentionally misleading parliament should be able to be identiýed as ćcontempt of parliamentć. As well as being made to give a public apology, MPs who break this rule should be ýned or otherwise punished.

Supported by 98%



Members were also clear that stronger sanctions are needed when MPs knowingly act dishonestly. Lying to parliament receivwho) ϟ γ ᴀ ᴛ ҽ l M ⸗ ƅ l ˳ ƿ l M ᵀ ˏ !

Recommendation 6.6: In the workplace MPs should be subject to the same sanctions as other employees regarding the treatment of staff. Bullying or harassment should not be tolerated.

Supported by 93%

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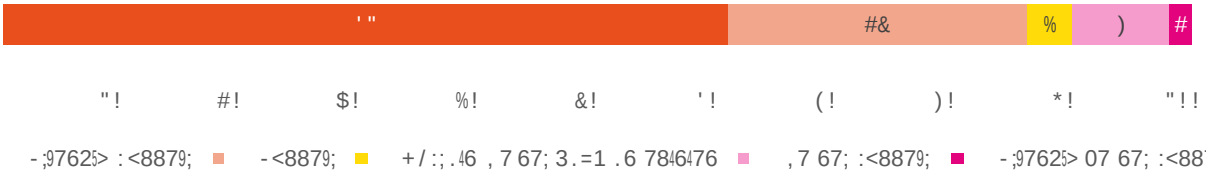
Recommendation 7.1: Courts should be able to overturn laws that are judged as violating legally recognised human rights. Otherwise, they should not have the power to override the sovereignty of parliament.

Supported by 86%



In saying that courts should have the power to overturn laws that are ruled as breaching the rights recognised in the Human Rights Act, members were calling for signiýcantly strengthened judicial review. At present, courts can rule that a law is ôincompatibleõ with protected rights, but it is for parliament then to decide whether that law will be changed. While the evidence presented to members suggested that laws have almost always been changed in response to such rulings, members remained dissatisýed that this could be relied on. Many of the arguments raised in the members' discussions related to a lack of trust in

A majority government can't just put a law through saying no more democracy and end up in a dictatorship. When a government has a large majority in Parliament, and can get most measures through the house, the courts should be used to restrain and modify any extreme proposed laws that shift the basis of our democracy. E.g. the present proposals to introduce voter ID.

Recommendation 7.3: If the courts were to be given wider scope to challenge unfair laws and ask parliament to think again (beyond legally protected human rights) that power should be used sparingly. If overused it could mean we lose important features of our democracy and be governed by the courts rather than the people we elect to represent us.

Supported by 83%

a potential ôfast trackô procedure to overrule court decisions, which could potentially limit the role of parliament. While recognising that a majority government could still ôpush throughô its preferred outcome, members argued that it was important, in the interest of transparency, that the issues were fully aired in public.

> *[It's important] so that we still have a democracy at all - otherwise a majority could essentially end this and pass any law it wants and render*

We feel about how democracy is working in the UK today because there is a disconnect between people and the system. We do not feel listened to and there is no clear way to have inþuence. We need to feel that change can happen and that different voices are taken into account.

We feel about how democracy is working in the UK because there are laws that protect our rights to vote and be represented.

But in a ógoodô UK democracy there would be better connection and engagement between people and their elected representatives, and governments would be brave enough to listen to the recommendations of a Citizens' Assembly.

We feel about how democracy is working in the UK because there'll be another General Election soon.

In a ógoodô UK democracy the people in power would have integrity.

We feel about how democracy is working in the UK today because it is a democracy and we do have a vote. Because of this governments do change and come to an end.

In a ógoodô UK democracy however it is important that everyone should educate themselves about their vote and our democratic system, appreciate having a vote and a voice, and value that everyone is able to participate and has an equal right to be heard.

We feel with how democracy is working in the UK today because there are not enough ôordinary peopleô in parliament and government.

In a ógoodô UK democracy people wouldnôt feel inhibited to stand for election to represent their communities and the barriers that stop ordinary people being elected would be removed.

We feel about how democracy is working in the UK today because the agenda is too often party political, rather than being about working for us.

In a ógoodô UK democracy the people, and their welfare, would be at the forefront of all policy, laws and decision making.

We feel in how democracy is working in the UK right now because, no matter which party is in power, a big part of the population is likely to be dissatisýed due to the nature of the current voting system.

In a ógoodô UK democracy there would be new political parties which are changing with the times, a spending cap on campaign funding, and an opportunity to explore proportional representation to enable the better inclusion of everyone's views in parliament.

We feel about the way democracy the UK is working at the moment and question the strength of our democratic system to withstand attempts to rewrite fundamental principles of the British constitution without consultation with the people.

In a ógoodô UK democracy we would have a representative system where elected members display respect for the core elements of our democracy and the people's right to choose.

With the Assembly lasting only six weekends, some elements of democracy inevitably received little attention, and members understandably sometimes found that frustrating. When they were surveyed at the end of the Assembly, members were asked whether there were any aspects of democracy they would

The following is a complete list of the resolutions and recommendations agreed by Assembly members.

We believe that parliament needs to be able to play a stronger role in scrutinising the actions of government. Collectively, it represents the voice of the electorate as a whole, whereas not everyone voted for the government.

Supported by 92%

Recommendation 1.1: When signiýcant new policies are announced by the government there should be an opportunity for full parliamentary scrutiny before decisions are made.

Supported by 96%

Recommendation 1.2: While there needs to be scope for the opposition to question policies proposed by a democratically elected government, and for MPs to scrutinise details, when a policy was clearly laid out in their manifesto the government should not be unduly blocked or delayed in implementing it.

Supported by 84%

Recommendation 1.3: In the interest of transparency, but subject to the need to maintain security, there should be a public record of the expert advice given to the government to inform their policy decisions so that members of the public can understand the basis of the decision, even if they don't agree with it.

Supported by 96%

Recommendation 1.4: Government should not be able to make signiýcant legal changes ï whether through primary or secondary legislation – without proper scrutiny. A cross-party parliamentary committee – not the government – should decide which laws are judged ósigniýcantô.

Supported by 93%

Recommendation 1.5: In cases of emergency when there is a need to introduce new laws quickly without allowing for full scrutiny and debate, these should be clearly identiýed as temporary laws, with a scheduled review date as early as possible, at which point parliament should have the opportunity to debate the law, and to amend it or repeal it.

Supported by 98%

Recommendation 1.6: When voting on new laws that were not key manifesto pledges, MPs should have permission to vote in a way that represents the views of their constituents without penalty, particularly on issues that directly affect their constituency even if that is against the position of their party.

Supported by 93%

Recommendation 1.7: MPs must be able to ensure that issues that are important to the public and/or have signiýcant public support are raised in parliament, debated publicly and decided, even if they are not part of the government's programme or are something that the government actively disagrees with.

Supported by 95%

Recommendation 1.8: The right of all elected MPs to propose a bill should be protected. A cross-party committee should decide which bills are debated in parliament. Where there is substantial support for a bill, time should be available to scrutinise it and decide on it properly.

Supported by 88%

Recommendation 1.9: More ýxed time needs to be reserved in the parliamentary schedule to ensure that matters such as private members' bills and public petitions can be debated and decided, without being ótalked outô. But this should be balanced against the right of government to have the time to deliver on what they were elected to do.

Supported by 92%

Recommendation 1.10: The government should propose when parliament goes into recess, but MPs should be able to debate and amend the proposal before a vote in parliament. Government can however recall parliament in the case of exceptional circumstance / emergency.

Supported by 91%

Recommendation 1.11: A petition signed by half of the elected MPs should be able to demand that parliament is recalled from recess to debate important decisions.

Supported by 94%

Recommendation 1.12: The Prime Minister should only be able to call an early general election if it is supported by a vote in the House of Commons.

Supported by 78%

Recommendation 3.4: The powers of the petitions system should be expanded to allow the public, once a petition has a ôhighô number of signatures, to demand a citizensô assembly be convened to provide advice to ministers on the considered view of a representative group of the public on an issue.

Supported by 79%

Recommendation 3.5: The powers of the petitions system should be expanded to allow the public, once a petition has a ôhighô number of signatures, to demand a public inquiry into an issue.

Supported by 68%

We believe that referendums are an important tool for direct democracy that can add to a good democracy in the UK by handing important decisions back to the people.

Supported by 83%

Recommendation 4.1: Referendums should be used sparingly and predominantly for constitutional issues of signiýcant national (or regional) importance.

Supported by 88%

Recommendation 4.2: The use of referendums should be restricted to when there are clearly deýned, but contentious, choices where the consequences of the decision can be accurately set out in advance.

Supported by 90%

Recommendation 4.3: In order to generate the trust needed for genuine, free and authentic conversations, involvement and outcomes, when a referendum is called there should be an impartial, non-political body (like the Electoral Commission) that is responsible for providing the public with clear, unbiased, factual information that they can use to understand the issues involved.

Supported by 96%

Recommendation 4.4: Referendums should only be considered as binding instructions to government if there is a supermajority result. 50% +1 support is not enough to be considered a mandate from society.

Supported by 76%

We believe that deliberative processes like citizens' assemblies should be used more often by governments and parliaments throughout the UK to understand the views of the public.

Supported by 90%

Recommendation 5.1: Deliberative processes should be used on divisive issues that are really important to people, either locally or nationally, and widely publicised and scrutinised so that they become trusted by the public and politicians.

Supported by 93%

Recommendation 5.2: The results of a deliberative process like a citizens' assembly should provide advice to decision makers but should not be binding, as that would be undemocratic since the members are not elected.

Supported by 85%

Recommendation 5.3: The results of deliberative processes like citizens' assemblies that are initiated by government or parliament need to have an impact. When they are convened, there should be a guarantee that their results will be made public, their recommendations will receive a detailed response from the convening body, and they will be debated in parliament.

Supported by 93%

Recommendation 5.4: Citizens' assemblies or citizens' juries should be convened to advise on and sense-check new laws proposed by the government that are outside their manifesto commitments, as a formal mechanism of public scrutiny of new proposals. Their ýndings should be published.

Supported by 80%

Recommendation 5.5: Deliberative processes should be used to enhance local as well as national decision-making, so that decisions are made that are informed by what local people want.

Supported by 91%

Recommendation 5.6: MPs should hold locally based deliberative processes with a cross-section of their constituency before voting on controversial policy issues so that they can better understand the concerns of their electorate.

Supported by 85%

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