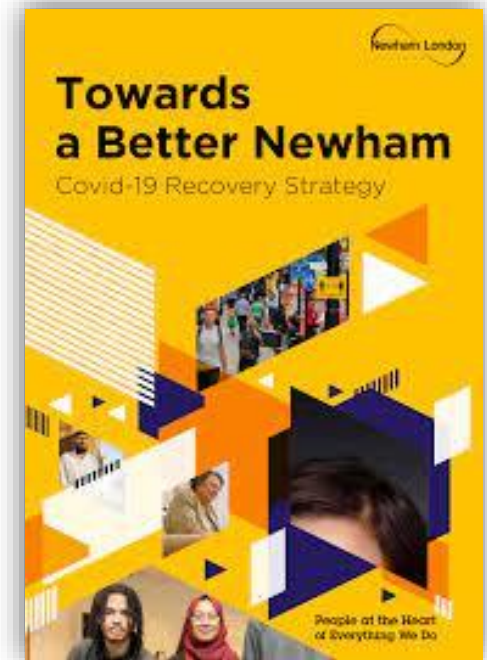


# Healthy Cities Commission – Consultation Response by Newham Council



1. Governance & Decision Making Processes
2. Built environment, design and placemaking
3. Health & Wellbeing
4. Transport and movement, infrastructure and technology
5. Devolving power to increase impact



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# Introduction



We welcome the Healthy Cities Commission's ambition to develop the evidence base to make our urban areas more supportive of health & wellbeing and better involve citizens in the development of our cities.

In this response, we set out our work, lessons learned and recommendations on key areas of the Healthy Cities Commission.

We look forward to identifying potential opportunities for sharing knowledge and collaborating in the future to put communities and wellbeing at the centre of the development of our local areas.

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# We are one of the most diverse & young areas in the UK

- Newham has one of the most entrepreneurial, diverse, and young populations in the UK, with over one-third of the population under 25 years old.
- Currently, the borough is home to 364 000 people, with the population projected to rise to over half a million by 2050.
- Newham reflects the world, with over a hundred different languages spoken on our streets and a vibrant mix of ethnic groups, with 72% of our residents from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities.
- London's fastest growing Metropolitan Centre and only Enterprise Zone with Royal Docks as potential incubator for the green innovation and circular economy.

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# We are also one of the most deprived local areas in the country



- Although Newham has made great strides in tackling deprivation since 2015, it is still ranked amongst the most deprived in England.
- Over a quarter of our neighbourhoods are in the 20% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.
- Over a quarter of our residents are paid below the London Living wage.
- 27% of residents are paid below the London Living wage, from our Employment Rights Research
- Our residents are the most over-indebted in London.
- Our average rents represent 65% of average wages compared to 30% across the UK.
- We have the highest overall level of homelessness in England.

*"There have been lots of times in my life when it's come to the end of the day, week or month and we've not had enough money to pay for essentials like rent or heating."*



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Help us to help Newham

**While our borough deeply suffer the inequalities of our economy, our communities have a wealth of skills and resources we mobilise:**



- We put people's wellbeing at the heart of everything we do
- We work with our partners & communities to deliver at pace
- We put power in the hands of people to develop solutions with us



# 1. Commission Theme: Governance & Decision Making Processes



- The Commission would like evidence on how best city leaders can ensure that the voices of citizens shape their policymaking and keep the public engaged with the process of policymaking and what are the methods that work. We would like to share the work we are doing and the lessons we are learning.
- Putting people at the heart of everything we do is a key strategic principle for Newham Council. It is committed to better involving residents because working together with our communities achieves better services and outcomes and makes the borough a happier and healthier place to live.
- We set up a Democracy and Civic Participation Commission in 2020 to enable democracy in the borough to become more representative and participatory and to look at alternative governance models for the council.
- We established the UK's first permanent citizens assembly and one of the country's largest participatory budgeting programmes to support our residents to be "policy makers" and "budget makers"
- We also mobilised pioneering alliances to "co-produce" with residents and partners, setting Help Newham to mobilise staff and residents to provide emergency support during the pandemic, and the Newham Social Welfare Alliance which brings together frontline partners to support residents at risk of crisis.
- We set up Health Champions to engage residents to protect themselves from Covid, now leading a national network, and are training residents to carry out research in their communities as part of the UK's first longitudinal programme through community-led research.

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## 2. Commission Theme: Built environment, design and placemaking



- The Commission would like evidence on how changes to design & housing can lead to healthier cities and what changes are needed on housing as a result of Covid.
- Newham has one of the highest rates of overcrowding in the country and Covid-19 has exposed that this poses risks not just for individual households, but for the city and country in terms of making it more challenging to contain the spread of the virus.
- We have taken a bold approach to meeting people's needs, through the pandemic notably in having the highest proportionate reduction in rough sleeping and through our housing delivery strategy and improving the rights of renters.
- We have developed a new housing allocations policy, considering changes that prioritise households in most need – currently, it prioritises people in employment
- We have launched our new Housing Delivery Strategy in summer 2021, setting out our plans for housing in the borough over the next 3-5 years

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# Designing healthy neighbourhoods

- We are embedding the '15-minute neighbourhoods' approach into our programme to improve Newham's high streets.
- Our "Levelling Up" bid to Government focused on investment in physical infrastructure for healthy neighbourhoods that connect residents to jobs and opportunities.
- We are developing Active Spaces to establish a network of spaces across the Borough's high streets where people from all background can come together to work, socialise, receive support and test new ideas.
- We are developing Accessible Streets: improvements to street scene, environment and infrastructure to make them more welcoming to people from all backgrounds
- We will launch a Citizens Assembly to empower residents to develop proposals on how their neighbourhoods can become places where they can meet their everyday needs.



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# Tackling the climate emergency

- The Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change set out how we would be carbon zero by 2050. Our Climate Emergency Action Plan cuts across several of themes from the Healthy Cities Commission on both the built environment and place making.
- A new emissions-based parking permits scheme
- Significantly decarbonising our pensions, moving £200m of assets to a more socially responsible funds
- Greening our fleet and moving to 100% renewable for our buildings
- Developing one of the largest networks of air quality monitors in the country
- Ensuring new Council homes target Passivhaus low energy standards
- Promoting the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone as an incubator for the green technology sector



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# 3. Commission Theme: Transport and movement, infrastructure and technology



The Commission would like evidence on how we can work with different sectors to improve the environment.

- As a borough, we are exposed to one of the highest levels of pollution in the capital
- However, we have strong ambitions in tackling the climate emergency and providing active travel, through our citizens assembly and work on low traffic neighbourhoods and safer streets.
- We are designing healthier 15 minute neighbourhoods on our high streets and public services, and will be launching the UK's first 15 minute neighbourhood citizens assembly.
- We are launching "Newham Sparks" to showcase the untapped potential of data and digital for social change and inclusive economic growth" as per our strategic ambition around technology.
- We face the constant challenge of a lack of long term funding and the poor value for money that comes from the proliferation of competitive bidding pots between local areas.
- Recommendations highlighted earlier on devolving investment to local places would accelerate the investment in innovation in active travel and infrastructure for healthier neighbourhoods, and attract private investment who can benefit from improved physical infrastructure.

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# 4. Commission Theme: Health & wellbeing



- The Commission would like evidence on how health should be the prism through which to consider the full spectrum of a city's social and public policies and what data is most useful in measuring the health of cities.
- We are a borough that suffers from poor health & wellbeing, linked to wider factors around poverty & inequality, that were exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Working with our partners in Newham, we have operated effectively as a system during the pandemic and what would enable us to continue doing so in non-crisis times.
- Our strategies put wellbeing at the centre and we are the first London borough to develop an outcomes framework focused on wellbeing.
- The preventative work we are undertaking with the Social Welfare Alliance shows how we can work together across our partners and communities on the frontline.
- Despite the challenges we faced with the national response to Covid, we took the initiative to trial innovations based on our deep understanding of our place and people and this illustrates why we need more localised approaches to health.

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# 50 Steps to a Better Newham – A strategic approach to tackle health inequalities



- We developed our health & wellbeing strategy - 50 Steps to a Healthier Newham – with our partners – to tackle the health inequalities that exist within the borough.
- The 50 Steps is a call to action to partners, the council and the wider community to work together to make Newham a healthier and happier place.
- It build on our strong relationships and innovative interventions on prevention, and the rapid mobilisation to tackle the pandemic.
- For each step, we have a set of actions and lead change maker to mobilise the borough.

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**NEWHAM CHANGEMAKER**

**Dr Farzana Hussain**

GP Principal and Clinical Director for



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# Protecting people from the impacts of the virus



- We rapidly scaled-up our community Covid-19 testing and tracing offer to our residents, making Newham a place with one of the highest numbers of local test centres in the Country
- Worked with our health partners to support the national vaccination roll-out programme for Newham's residents
- Worked across our partnership to establish our Health Champions Network of over 300 health champions who have supported our residents through the covid crisis
- Supported Newham's most vulnerable residents with a long-term solution to rough sleeping with appropriate services in place
- Continued close working with our network of care homes and care providers to ensure they can continue to support and safeguard our most vulnerable residents.
- Rolled out our own bespoke Enhanced Isolation COVID-19 Support offer to residents unable to isolate in their own home

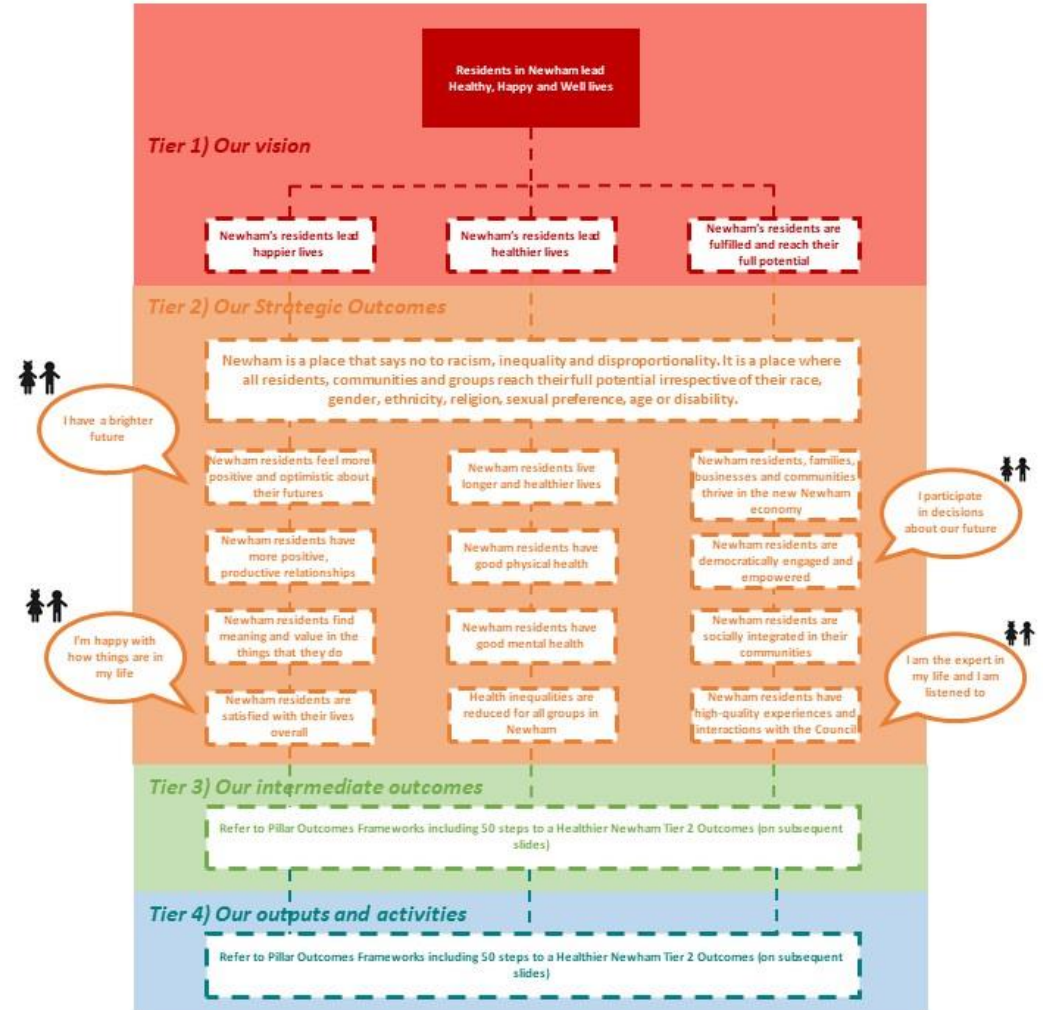


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# Developing an outcomes framework with wellbeing at the centre

- We are the first borough in London to formally focus on livelihood, wellbeing and happiness as our prime measure of economic success.
- We recognise that traditional measures of economic success are increasingly irrelevant to people's lived experiences and belie the everyday experiences of our neighbourhoods and communities.
- We are establishing new core measures which we will adopt to do this, making insights available to our partners and communities.

## Newham Outcomes Framework



# 5. Devolving power to increase impact

- We recommend that power & resources are devolved to local places.
- Being able to use investment & powers at a local level is more effective as it helps coordinate delivery on the ground - from local services and more communities, in a way that's
  - Quicker and more responsive to people's needs, while being able to plan for the future
  - More accountable to residents as led by democratically-elected bodies and can be developed through participatory mechanisms
  - More collaborative, as it builds on existing relationships between partners and participatory mechanisms like above
- Citizens & community assemblies could shape priorities and how funding is spent on health & wellbeing.
- Alliances such as Help Newham and Social Welfare Alliance could then translate those recommendations into action, which could be co-produced by residents.



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# The potential of devolving power & resources for healthy cities

Government should devolve whole budgets to places to enable councils & other place leaders to coordinate the use of those budgets together, rather than devolving budgets on specific issues which create siloes

If funding was devolved to local places, those areas could set up:

- Local investment funds focused on specific priorities to invest in scaling up innovative support for residents' wellbeing
- Infrastructure that could support the development of businesses or cooperatives that would be focused on health & wellbeing services – a “15 minute neighbourhood” economy

This would help

- Improve the involvement of residents in shaping issues
- Coordinate funding & skills across partners to tackle the issues
- Scale up use of participatory budgeting
- Attract more external investors to fund solutions to these issues (i.e. community wealth funds)





# Providing the essentials to help people live in healthy cities with dignity

Newham London

- There are also policies that the Government can enact to support healthy cities in the short term including
- COVID Deprivation Premium
- Extension to Universal Credit uplift
- Extension to furlough scheme and eviction ban, while exploring a minimum income guarantee
- Enforcement of minimum wage and employment rights
- Support for those with Non Recourse to Public Fund status
- Investment in universal free school meals and trialling universal basic services in other areas



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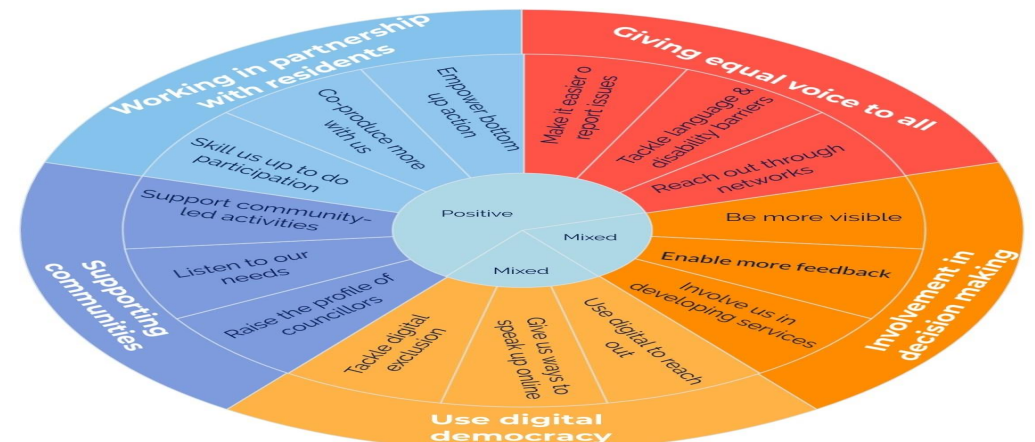
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# 1.1 Setting up a Democracy & Civic Participation Commission

- We set up a Democracy and Civic Participation Commission in 2020 to enable democracy in the borough to become more representative and participatory and to look at alternative governance models for the council.
- The Commission brought together local and national experts related to the Commission themes. It involved residents in this process by being able to take part in community activities and events, as well as online engagement.
- The Council agreed to implement all of its recommendations, and we share below those that are most relevant to the Healthy Cities Commission.

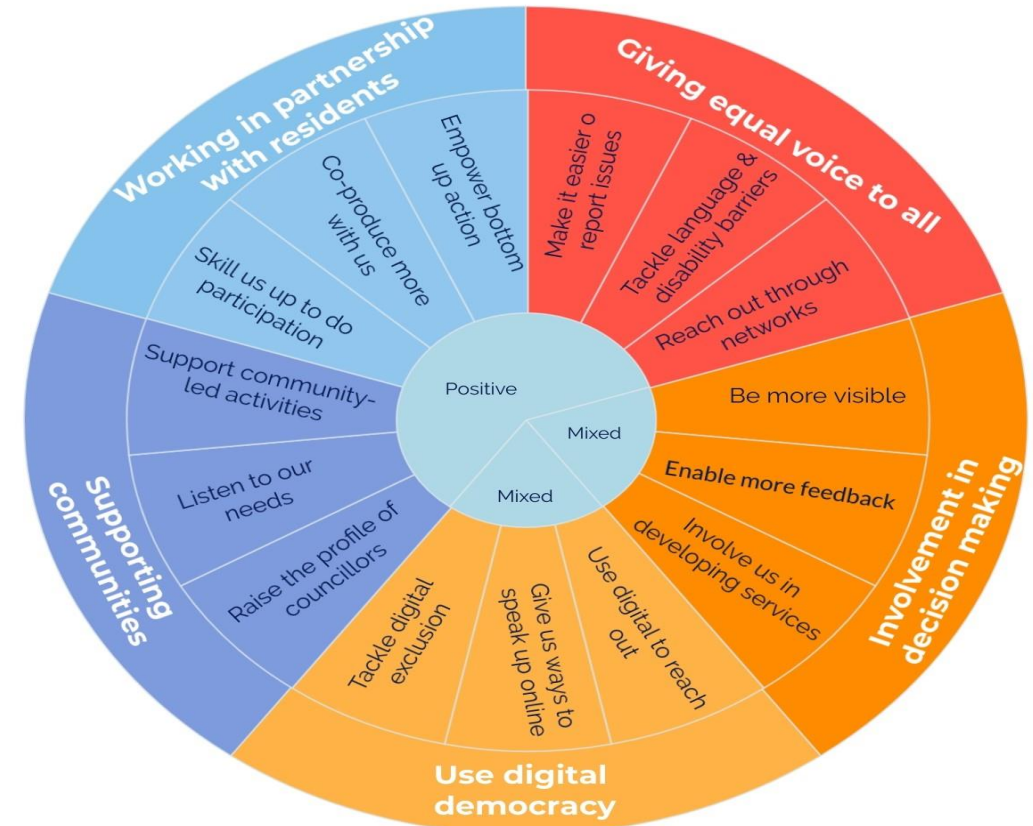
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# 1.2 Learning the lessons from involving residents in policy making

To ensure that the voices of citizens can shape policy making, it's important that leaders of local areas

- Create opportunities for residents to be involved throughout the process of designing and delivering policies and services
- Value the different strengths & expertise of people from different backgrounds and sectors in shaping the lives of people and our neighbourhoods
- Improve how we support participation with residents and partners so that we work more in partnership and devolve power to residents





# 1.3 Creating opportunities for residents to be involved throughout

We believe that participation in helping develop healthy cities & local areas can't just be at specific points in time, but throughout the process of designing & delivering strategies & services.

That's why we have established the UK's first permanent citizens assembly, one of the country's largest participatory budgeting programmes and pioneering alliances with partners to mobilise the solidarity of residents.

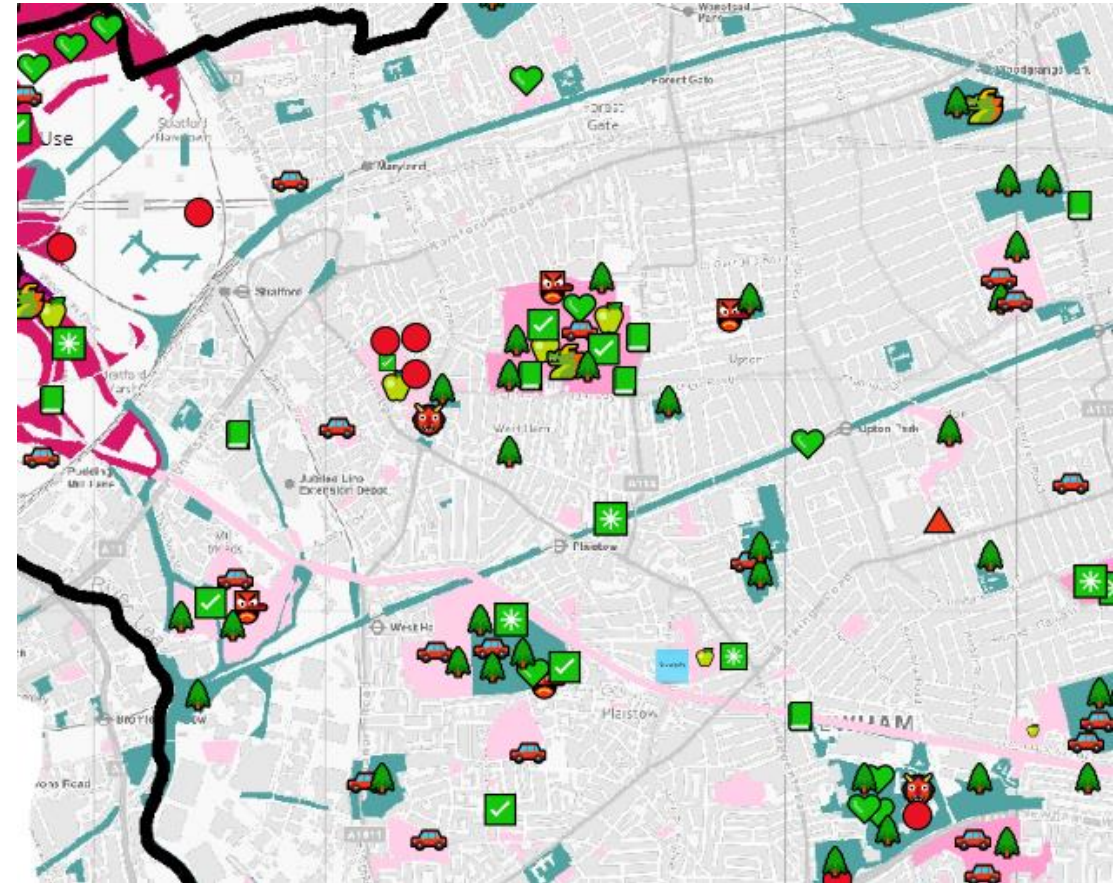
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# 1.3 Residents as “policy makers”

We have established the UK's first permanent citizens assembly to develop our future strategies in a way that is

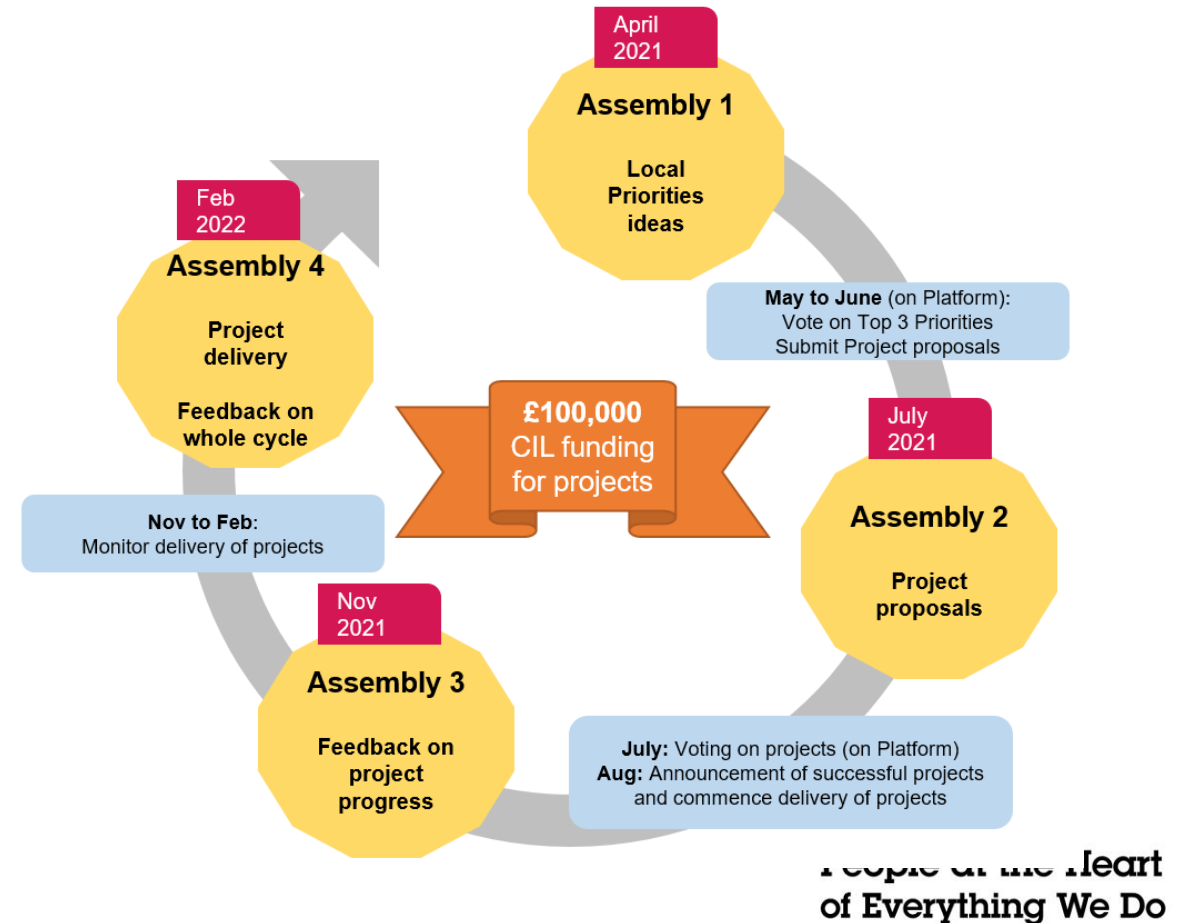
- **Inclusive** in that it recognises the different roles that people play to tackle issues. That's why the Council invites a representative set of people and people with lived experience
- **Ambitious** in that they can genuinely tackle the challenges and that by the end of this assembly, residents can work out what are the most important priorities to focus on within this issue
- **Strengths-building** helping residents develop “policy making” skills in learning different levers we can use, building consensus between competing perspectives to develop recommendations
- We invite residents to vote on the issues the assembly should focus on. The next assembly will focus on 15 Minute Neighbourhoods.
- We also created an Advisory Group made up of local partners to ensure the Assembly considers the different levers their sectors have.



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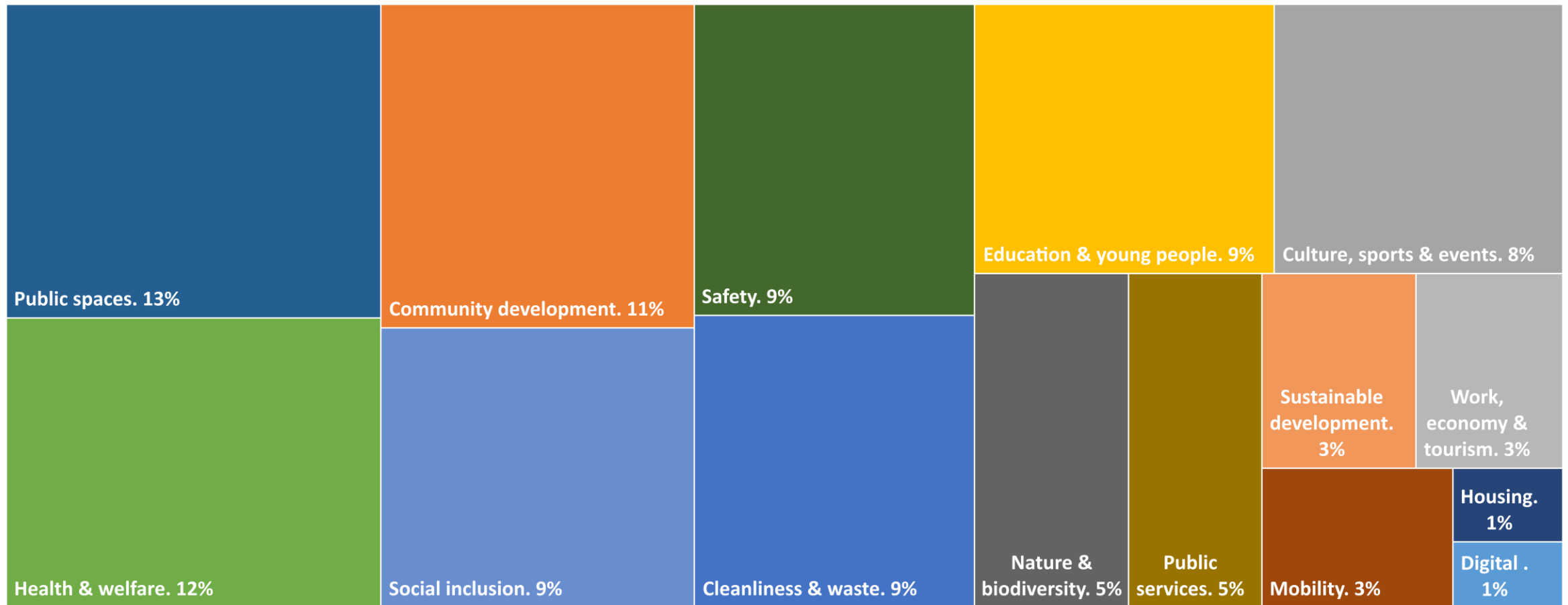
# 1.4 Residents as “budget makers”

- **We run one of the country’s largest participatory budgeting programmes**, through our Community Assemblies, where we provide £100k for each of our neighbourhoods for people to decide on budget priorities for those areas, and then what projects should be funded.
- Each Community Neighbourhood has a working group from the previous cycle of assemblies that consists of local people who live, work or learn in the area, councillors and council officers using an online participatory budgeting platform.
- They work together to review the priorities and the information that has emerged from the new cycle of community assemblies. They then make an assessment on the local priorities and advise on the appropriate projects and activities, using their local knowledge of the neighbourhood area.





# Issues residents most want to develop projects in their communities in 2021



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# 1.5 Residents as “co-producers”

- Local authorities are devolving power already to communities, coordinating use of resources with other organisations and investing in people's solidarity without government direction.
- We set up Help Newham to mobilise staff and residents to provide emergency support during the pandemic.
- We set up the Newham Social Welfare Alliance which brings together frontline workers from local organisations to support residents together who are at risk of crisis or in crisis.
- We are training people up to carry out research in their communities as “citizen scientists” as part of the UK’s first longitudinal programme through community-led research.
- We have set up local Health Champions to co-produce how we engage residents in protecting themselves from the virus, which is now leading a national network of Health Champions.
- We will be using these experiences to develop a participation framework and academy to improve people’s skills in participation & co-production.



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