



Democracy Commission – Kirklees Council staff survey

441 employees took part in this short online survey about local democracy. The survey ran during September 2016.

How should we do democracy here in Kirklees?

In the last year, have you been in touch with any Kirklees councillors as part of your job?

224 (51%)	Yes
211 (49%)	No

How do you think the relationship between councillors and council officers could be improved? (select any that apply)

255 (59%)	Councillors should make more time to understand what officers do
223 (52%)	The role of councillors needs to be clearer
164 (38%)	There should be opportunity to meet councillors
133 (31%)	Councillors should be more supportive
50 (12%)	Councillors should interfere less
53 (12%)	I have no idea

The two most popular responses here point to a need for better communication in both directions between officers and councillors.

Thinking about how you feel about how Kirklees Council makes decisions now, please chose where you fit on the scale:

1 - I have no idea how decisions are made	2	3	4	5 - I fully understand the council's decision-making process
49 (11%)	79 (18%)	142 (33%)	121 (28%)	44 (10%)

1 - I'm completely uninterested in how decisions are made	2	3	4	5 - I'm extremely interested in how decisions are made
9 (2%)	24 (6%)	115 (26%)	168 (39%)	119 (27%)

1 - Councillors make decisions in secret in closed rooms	2	3	4	5 - Councillors make open decisions in public
37 (9%)	90 (21%)	184 (43%)	90 (21%)	29 (7%)

1 - No one can be involved unless	2	3	4	5 - Anyone can get involved if they choose
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councillors want them to be				
41 (9%)	100 (23%)	176 (40%)	83 (19%)	35 (8%)

1 - I've never influenced a council decision	2	3	4	5 - I think I've influenced a council decision in the past
173 (40%)	79 (18%)	79 (18%)	51 (12%)	48 (11%)

Results for this set of questions closely mirror the feelings of our residents' e-panel – many of our staff live in Kirklees, with their perceptions as residents influencing their views. There are mixed perceptions on how decisions are made, and limited understanding of the process. A high proportion believe they have never influenced a council decision, despite the majority being interested in how decisions are made.

It would save money for us to elect Kirklees councillors only once every four years, but this would mean you would get to exercise your right to vote less often (at the moment we elect councillors three years out of every four). How would you feel about changing to one local election every four years?

133 (31%)	It sounds like a great idea in principle
205 (47%)	Sounds okay but I would need to know more
53 (12%)	It sounds like it would be a bad idea to me
44 (10%)	I would be totally against changing to four yearly elections

There is strong feeling from those employees that took part that we should move to four yearly voting. For comparison 61% of our residents' e-panel felt the same way.

Do you think that..

	Yes	Unsure	No
..people should be able to vote electronically (on smartphones, tablets, laptops etc)	276 (63%)	61 (14%)	102 (23%)
..the voting age for local elections should be lowered to 16, to encourage more young people to participate in local democracy	201 (46%)	79 (18%)	158 (36%)
..councillors should have less control and the local community should have more	196 (45%)	195 (45%)	47 (11%)

While there is clearly some uncertainty around making changes to the way we vote, the majority were in agreement about electronic voting being a positive step. Almost half of respondents thought that 16 year olds should be able to vote. Only 1 in 10 respondents to this staff survey disagreed that the local community should have more control, showing an appetite for more devolved decision making in the local area.