

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

Chris Mountain (Town Planning student, Forum Chair, MHCLG official)

24/7/19

Neighbourhood Planners London

“My research shows that Forums are here to stay. We’ve all taken different approaches on governance and this is a great opportunity to discuss what works”

Feedback from this session will be incorporated into my University of Westminster dissertation on Forum Governance and will help inform any recommendations made in that study

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

Off to a good start...

- “...35% of the country will be covered by democratic parish councils...while the remaining 65% will be represented by Forums with no democratic legitimacy and no accountability”. (Jack Dromey MP, 2011)
- “The contention that the Localism agenda signalled a new partnership between people and planning is highly questionable”. (Gallent and Robinson, 2013)
- “...underlying neoliberal motivations”. (Davoudi, 2013)

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

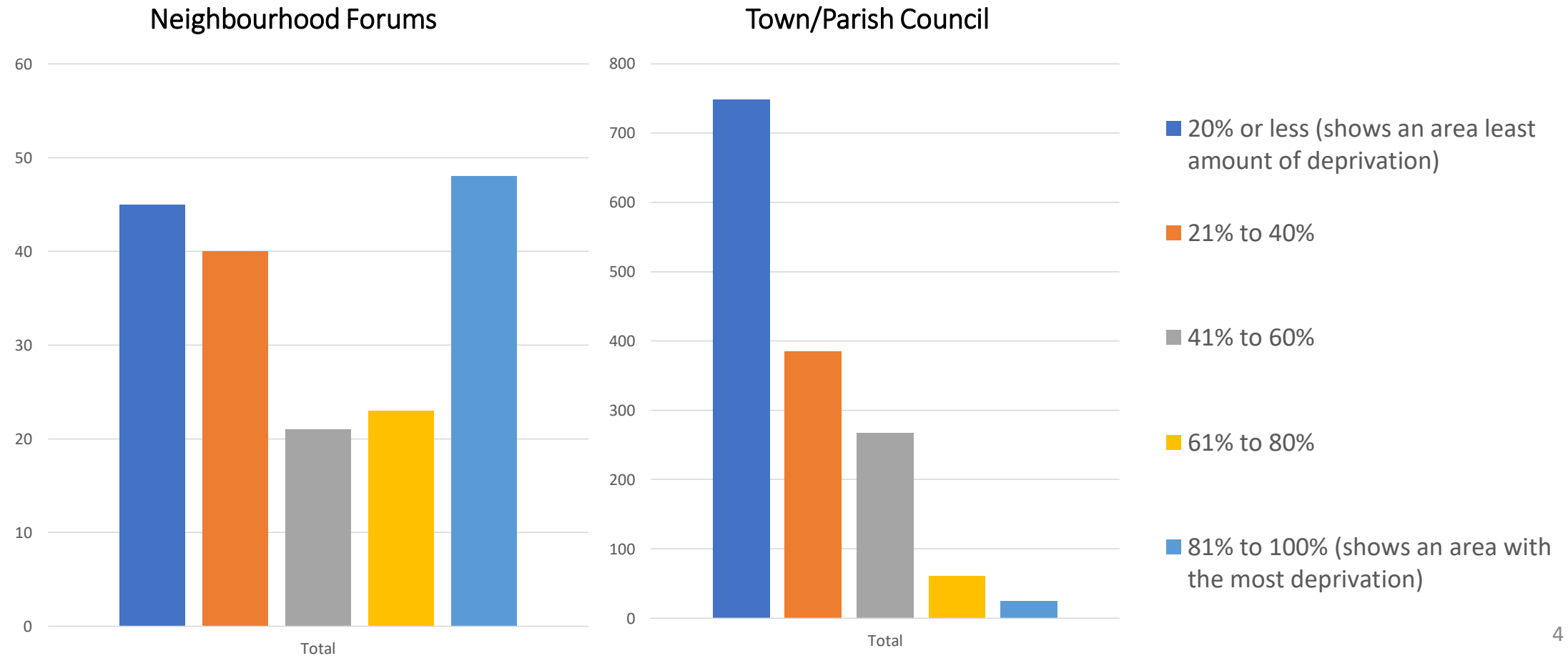
2019 Forum stats:

- 225 Forums
- 49 successful referendums
- Across 32 local planning authority areas (MHCLG, June 2019)

- 177 Forums or Prospective Forums awarded grant and/or technical support by Government via Locality from April 2015 – March 2019
- Around 1,500 Town/Parish Councils supported during that period

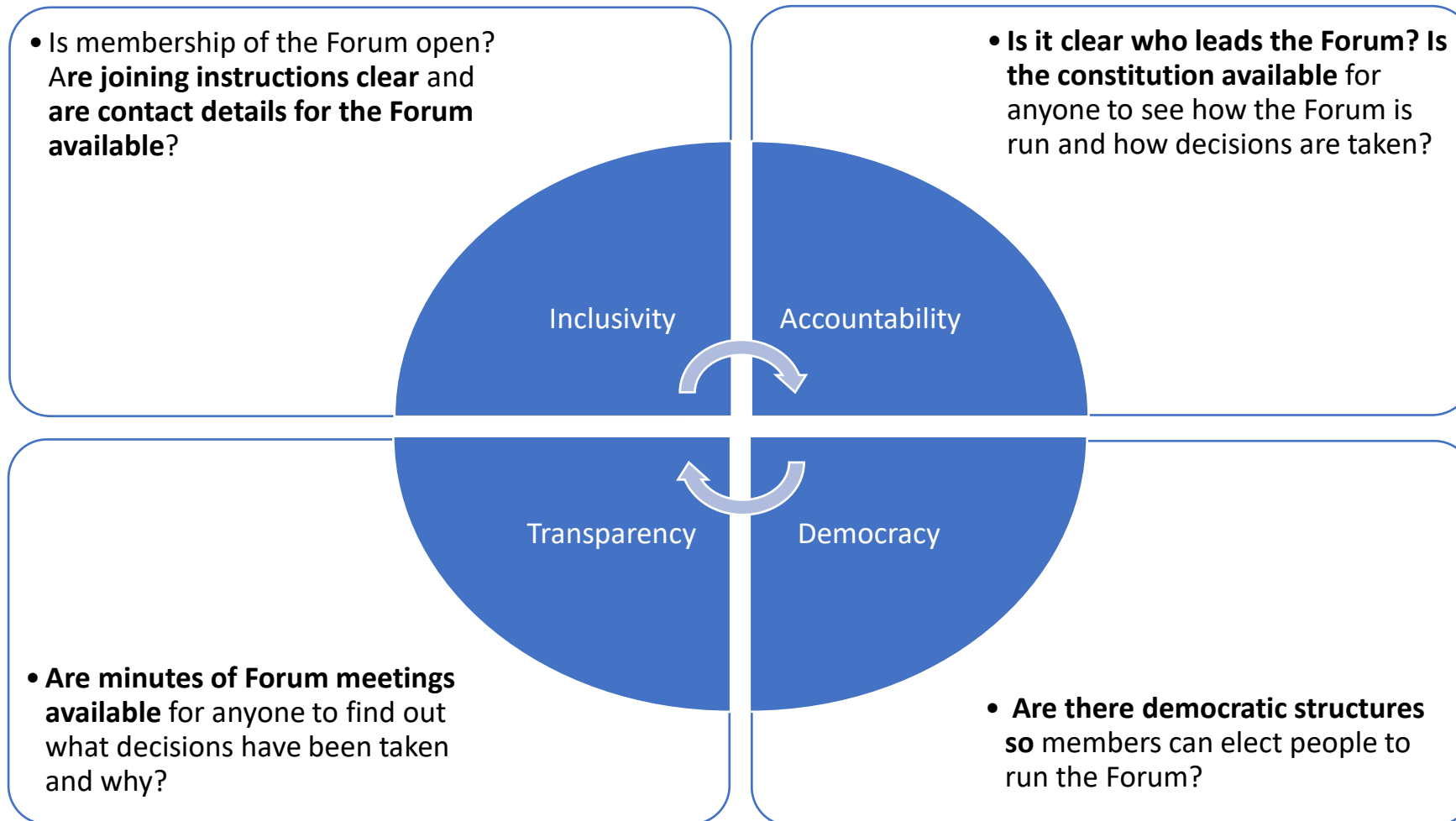
Running a Neighbourhood Forum

Self-reported deprivation level for neighbourhood planning groups awarded grant and/or technical support since 2015



Running a Neighbourhood Forum

Framework for assessing Forum Governance



Running a Neighbourhood Forum

Forum survey method

- One Forum from each of the 84 LPA areas featured in the 177
- Added a further 16 to round it up to 100
- 6 minute online survey of Forum websites
- How many of the 6 tests are met: yes or no answer for each
- Note made of any policies/procedures of interest

Question: Would you adopt these policies/procedures for your Forum?

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

INCLUSIVITY

Forum requires potential volunteers to disclose personal health and criminal record information

Forum member termination clause in constitution

Forum asks for financial donations

Forum asks for £10 membership fee/donation

Constitution that explicitly states that the Forum will not levy any form of subscription on its members

Forum membership minimum age of 16

Forum membership is automatically given to all local residents

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

ACCOUNTABILITY

Forum has joint chairs	
LPAs have established community engagement processes called neighbourhood forums.	
Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation	
Forum is a Community Interest Company	
The Forum is an arm of a Limited Company with delegated objectives	
Constitution sets out that the Forum will have no party political affiliation	
Constitution sets out that members will adhere to the Nolan Principles of public life	
When the plan is 'made', options include: continue the forum, disband, become a Parish Council	
Forum initiated by a Development Trust	
Forum is National Lottery funded	

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

DEMOCRACY

Forum constitution sets out that decisions are made by consensus.

Forum elects officers when the plan reaches certain formal stages, rather than annually.

Forum chair serves a 3 year period, with role interwoven with Companies House Director responsibilities

An existing Society has been designated as a Forum and the Society appoints the Forum steering committee

Electronic voting on Forum matters – such votes to be cast for at least three days

A steering group is elected by members. The steering group then elect officers

Running a Neighbourhood Forum

TRANSPARENCY

Forum chose not to publicise their draft plan online, rather to email a copy of it to members.

Forum publishes regular newsletters rather than minutes of meetings.

Forum members gave Council planners a successful tour of the Forum area.

Forum requests pre-application discussions for any local planning application “so the Forum can work with applicants to achieve the best possible Planning Application”.

Forum opposing allocations in emerging Local Plan

Forum represents an area divided into two parts – a non-contiguous boundary