1. About the RSA and the Citizens’ Economic Council

1.1 The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures (RSA) aims to help citizens create fulfilling lives and a flourishing society. Supported by our 29,000 Fellows, we share powerful ideas, carry out cutting edge research, and build opportunities for people to collaborate.

1.2 The evidence in this submission draws upon qualitative evidence gathered by the RSA Citizens’ Economic Council research programme,¹ which has engaged with 244 citizens across the UK on their experiences of economy and society in the following ways:

- **An Economic Inclusion Roadshow:** 12 focus groups across the UK engaging with 190 ‘left-behind’ citizens on economic inclusion (See Appendix A).

- **The Citizens’ Economic Council:** Engagement with a demographically diverse (see Appendix B), and randomly selected 54 citizens across the UK over five days in five months through a ‘jury-style’ deliberative process on economy and society.

- **Crowdsourcing economic policy:** engaging with over 1000 citizens on policy challenges identified by the Citizens’ Economic Council.

1.3 Our contributions in relation to education also draws upon the RSA’s experience working with a Family of seven RSA academies, as well as its work on creative learning and development through the Action and Research Centre.

2. Executive Summary

- Citizenship, including understanding how it is both supported and sustained, is a complex concept. The factors that shape it are individual (personalities and motivations), based on social networks, groups, and people’s environment, as well as wider social and global influences. Steps taken to strengthen citizenship therefore, will similarly need to be nuanced if they are to be successful.

- Effective civic engagement strengthens and deepens citizenship, and removes barriers that might exist preventing citizens from getting engaged. It also accounts for the risks of ‘engagement’ burnout and takes steps to safeguard citizens accordingly.

- The RSA see learning and development, both in schools and in later life as critical to supporting active citizenship and civic engagement. Citizenship education has enormous potential to strengthen citizens’ sense of belonging and citizenship.

- Recent work at the RSA has illustrated the importance of investment in civic engagement capacity if we are to encourage a sense of belonging and citizenship amongst those most ‘left-behind’ by national economic policy.

3. Citizenship as a complex phenomenon

Citizenship was a reoccurring theme in the deliberations of the Citizens’ Economic Council and the participants outlined the following dimensions as of importance:

3.1 Citizenship as a social contract

Citizenship meant the gaining of civic and social rights, in exchange for wider civic and social responsibilities. Citizens suggested that citizenship involved looking beyond individual self-interest towards considering the wider collective good. Those who fulfilled their responsibilities by adhering to laws and social norms, and contributing to society in some way, should have access to the basic rights of a citizen such as food, shelter, and work.

3.2 Citizenship is an important counterweight to consumerism

Participants recognised the tensions they experienced between wanting to be a ‘good citizen’ and the reality and pressures of their everyday life. For example, citizens contrasted their longer-term desire for food policy to promote healthy eating, sustainability and fair rewards for those in the supply chain, with their shorter-term desires for cheap, readily available and low cost food. Such examples demonstrate the importance of engaging with citizens in a more meaningful way, should policymakers seek to understand what it is that citizens want beyond market signals and consumer choice.

3.3 ‘Contribution’ needs to be understood broadly and barriers to it addressed

“We should value all types of contribution...even being parents.”
Participant, Citizens’ Economic Council

Citizens highlighted the gap between many forms of social contribution, and what is measured and therefore valued as an economic contribution (in GDP terms). For instance, we heard from a group of care workers about their experience of the disconnect between the contribution of care work and the way in which it was valued. Other participants in both the Roadshow and Council suggested society should appreciate contributions including parenting, unpaid childcare support, and volunteering. It was noted that many individuals may want to contribute but may face barriers including: a lack of time, poverty, or social circumstance (e.g. disability). Structural problems within the democratic system were also mentioned; citizens felt that often engagement processes might be tokenistic rather than responsive, and spoke of disillusionment and apathy with democratic processes due to prior negative experiences. Promoting a stronger sense of citizenship requires understanding the structural barriers that prevent people from participating, and taking steps to address those barriers. Citizens must also be safeguarded against engagement ‘burn out’, by taking care not to ask them to commit beyond what they are practically able to give and volunteer:

“There’s pressure on the citizen to do more. I’ve always seen myself as a good citizen because I worked hard in school and did all the right things, and then you expect to get an amazing job but it doesn’t work like that. ... It isn’t valued that we do those little things like look after someone... But there isn’t anyone asking me ‘are you okay?’”
Participant, Citizens’ Economic Council

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2 This reflects a longstanding philosophical tradition, with roots in the thinking and analysis of Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke and Rawls. Social contract theory is not limited to the traditions of Western political thinking; its origins emerge from the work of 3BC Buddhist emperor Asoka.
4. Effective civic engagement facilitates more active citizenship

4.1 The Citizens’ Economic Council proposed the following definition of engagement:

“Citizen engagement and empowerment

Citizens have the knowledge and capacity to positively contribute to society and the economy. Citizens have the information, knowledge, capacity, understanding and the opportunity to participate to the degree they wish, in local, regional and national economic policy making. Citizens are engaged and empowered to make decisions as communities – in ways that affect them locally and nationally. Citizens are able to participate in their workplaces and in their roles as consumers, suppliers and employees."

4.2 The most effective way of strengthening citizenship is to ensure good civic engagement is embedded in the course of the everyday life of the community. As the RSA report Community Capital details, empowerment also comes from being part of a social network and peer support, giving people a sense of self-efficacy and ability to engage as a citizen. Furthermore, people identify as citizens on multiple levels at the same time: community, region, nation (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Island), state (UK), European and global. A sense of belonging and connectivity is best built from the ground up - at a local level - and only with strong roots can a stronger sense of identity and pride be built.

5. Learning and development, both in schools and in later life as critical to supporting citizenship and civic engagement

“I think there should be more life education…. This would mean that children as they grow older then can make more informed decisions about their futures.”

Participant, Citizens’ Economic Council

5.1 Education has an essential role to play in ensuring that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens. The schools in RSA Academies, serving disadvantaged communities in Birmingham and the Black Country, are committed to providing a broad education that prepares children for the world beyond school. Students engage with workplaces, receive support for volunteering opportunities and enterprise programmes, and receive age appropriate careers advice and guidance. Unfortunately the narrow school accountability frameworks at both primary and secondary school, combined with real terms funding cuts are putting pressure on state schools to reduce the amount of time they are able to devote to these aspects of a child’s education. Recommendations to support and encourage all schools to prioritise citizenship would be welcome. This view is echoed by findings from the Citizens’ Economic Council, which proposed a National Review of Citizenship Education to address low levels of public understanding of economics, politics and society:

"Review the current curriculum on life skills, any advice that’s out there, what post education formal opportunities for self-education are there. Are we teaching people to be good citizens? Are schools providing at thorough understanding of mental health?"

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3 This paragraph is from the Citizens’ Economic Charter, co-created by the Council during their deliberations (See Appendix C for the full charter).

5.2 The Citizens’ Economic Council’s workshops with those of school age revealed that young people value and gain a great deal from civic engagement, and there are ways of encouraging young people to engage beyond voting. In Paris⁵ and Boston⁶ for instance, the cities’ participatory budgeting processes actively invite and welcome engagement from young people and children below voting age on how to spend their city’s budget.

6. Civic engagement can address the exclusion experienced by those ‘left behind’

6.1 People feel ‘left behind’ as a consequence of their interactions with the economy and the lack of opportunities available in their communities

A consistent theme throughout all workshops was a sense of inequality, lack of trust and imbalance in power between politicians, corporations, economic institutions and citizens. Many participants said that this made them and those that they knew feel disillusioned with the system and less likely to engage. Another strong theme that emerged was that a decline in services available had affected people’s sense of belonging to a community and being in an environment that enabled them to reach their full potential. We heard of concerns such as: lack of access to local voluntary and community services; uncertainties about the future of a local community centre; funding cuts to the police, NHS, and educational institutions; and the lack of good quality job opportunities, all of which affected peoples’ ability to take part in society. More specific barriers mentioned were the lack of translation services or language classes, particularly in some of the multicultural areas we visited, such as Birmingham and Oldham. In Oldham, the citizens of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani origin we spoke to felt disempowered by the disappearance of local civic support such as translation services, which had previously helped to strengthen community cohesion, and improve dialogue with public services.

6.2 Investing in people and places is necessary to unlock civic engagement

6.2.1 Civic engagement initiatives form an important part of investment in people and place. The RSA’s Inclusive Growth Commission has called such initiatives ‘social infrastructure’⁷ – ensuring that as many people as possible are able to both contribute to and benefit from growth. We understand social infrastructure as including early years support, education, skills and lifelong learning projects, early action and early intervention work and investment in community development. These are all crucial in helping people, communities and places connect to the benefits of economic activity – as well as to ensure those citizens and communities ‘left behind’ are able to realise their full potential as active citizens.


⁶ Through Boston’s ‘Youth Lead the Change’ initiative, young people aged 12-25 have offered and voted on over 700 ideas for urban improvements through online crowdsourcing and public vote. In the programme’s first year, 1,500 young people cast votes at polling places in schools, community centres and transit stations across the city. City of Boston. (2017) Youth Lead the Change. Available at: https://www.boston.gov/departments/boston-centers-youth-families/youth-lead-change

6.2.2 We found that citizens demonstrate, benefit from, and value social leadership. Very often social leadership is forged from necessity; building informal social networks and relationships to strengthen resilience in the face of economic exclusion. Many also spoke of the untapped potential citizens had to demonstrate social leadership, that could have been realised had they access to greater (financial and non-financial) support that understood the needs of the community.

“We work closely with the government, the local authority – we think we can do a better job as we are crowdsourcing ideas from the bottom up... we know how to solve our own problems – we just need the funding to get on with it.” - Participant, Ardenglen Housing Association, Glasgow

6.2.3 One example we encountered was that of a community group of older women who were given a small amount of NHS funding and supported by a housing association to run activities such as gardening and walking in one of Glasgow’s most deprived areas. When the funding ran out, the group had enough of a stake in the initiative to keep it going – and it continues to this day. One avenue to build membership and belonging is to better understand, identify and support social leadership in communities, and the kinds of civic institutions that can act as vehicles for strengthening sense of citizenship.

6.2.4 We have seen further examples of this through work the RSA has undertaken with community businesses⁸ across England. Across a wide range of community led businesses, from farms to community centres, we have heard about similar stories of positive impacts from the agency which local civic participation can provide. In Leeds, for example, having successfully developed a community health and wellbeing centre, the New Wortley Community Association is now developing community housing in the local area.

7. The importance of investment in civic engagement capacity

7.1 The key message from our workshops was that people will only engage if they feel it is meaningful and there is chance of them affecting change. Central and local government, and civil society organisations should be prepared to share power and co-produce initiatives with citizens if they are sincere about encouraging civic engagement. The RSA propose that:

7.2 Government conducts a review on, and creates a code of practice for civic engagement
The government last conducted a review⁹ and created a code of practice on consultation in 2008, which is now archived.¹⁰ We propose that a new review is undertaken, and a code of practice is created which moves beyond consultation, towards a wider range of civic engagement approaches.

7.3 Local government structures embed civic engagement into their governance
Combined authorities, LEPs and local authorities have an opportunity to use their new powers to work with residents, civil society and businesses to embed deliberative civic engagement

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⁸ RSA is delivering a leadership programme for people involved in community business across England. For more information see: Community Business Leadership Programme.
approaches into their decision making processes. We propose that such bodies work together to co-design and establish a charter for civic engagement for their city. This would set out a shared vision for engagement, the principles upon which it will be based, the practical ways in which citizens will be supported to get involved and the influence and impact they can achieve.

7.4 The government pilot and implement voluntary national service on policy issues
Participants on the Citizens’ Economic Council proposed setting up a form of voluntary national service for citizens akin to current jury service. This would pay individuals for their time and reimburse employers so that they could participate in national citizens’ panels that learnt about and advised government on policy issues. These are approaches that have been tried and tested across the world; notably through Ireland’s constitutional convention, and through deliberative citizens’ reference panels, citizen assemblies and councils in Canada and Australia at a local government level.

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11 For more information see: Convention on the Constitution. Available at: https://www.constitution.ie/Convention.aspx

12 Recommendations from the Toronto Residents’ Reference Panel on the Davenport Community Overpass (2017). Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55af0533e4b04f0fd6bca65bc8/t/55e48e32e4b01d0dc78b6144/1441041970276/Davenport_Panel_Report_EN.pdf

## Appendix A: Economic Inclusion Roadshow focus groups – make-up, recruitment, themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Partner(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial decline</td>
<td>Port Talbot, Baglan Community Centre</td>
<td>15-Oct-16</td>
<td>14 residents of Port Talbot. The participants were from a range of age groups, and mainly from socio-economic groups D, as well as some C2 and E.</td>
<td>Recruitment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low paid work</td>
<td>UNISON, London Offices</td>
<td>18-Oct-16</td>
<td>13 members of UNISON’s Homecare Workers Panel. 12 careworkers (all female) and one care receiver (male). The participants were middle-aged; they were predominately white British but two participants were from black and Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, and there was one white South African.</td>
<td>UNISON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability discrimination</td>
<td>Islington, Disability Action in Islington Offices</td>
<td>26-Oct-16</td>
<td>21 members of Disability Action in Islington. The participants were from a range of age groups and ethnic groupings.</td>
<td>Disability Action in Islington; Tamsin Curno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity and low income</td>
<td>Oldham, Coppice Neighbourhood Centre</td>
<td>08-Nov-16</td>
<td>19 local residents from ethnic minority backgrounds: Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Many participants were from low-income backgrounds; 13 of the participants were female; and the majority were middle-aged but there were also some participants aged 18-30.</td>
<td>Doing Social; Coppice Neighbourhood Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth perspectives</td>
<td>Tipton</td>
<td>22-Nov-16</td>
<td>Two groups (of 14 and 16 participants) at post-16 level. One group of nine participants at Year 8 level. Predominately white British, several international students from Norway and Italy.</td>
<td>RSA Academy Tipton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Clacton-on-Sea,</td>
<td>03-Dec-16</td>
<td>11 residents of Clacton-on-</td>
<td>Recruitment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Type</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Agency</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Baptist Church Hall on Pier Avenue</td>
<td>Sea, Holland-on-Sea, and Jaywick. The participants were from a range of age groups, and primarily from socio-economic groups C2, as well as some D and E.</td>
<td>Birmingham LGBT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT discrimination</td>
<td>Central Birmingham</td>
<td>07-Dec-16</td>
<td>10 members of Birmingham LGBT Network, around a third of whom were from BAME groups and one Eastern European.</td>
<td>Birmingham LGBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt and money</td>
<td>Birmingham, Aston</td>
<td>12-Jan-17</td>
<td>14 participants, the majority of whom were women. Participants were recruited from the Money Advice Service and the English as a Second Language (ESL) groups. Participants were predominately from BAME groups.</td>
<td>Birmingham Settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining community services</td>
<td>Birmingham, Kitts Green</td>
<td>12-Jan-17</td>
<td>19 participants, from a range of age groups. Predominately white British but a few participants from BAME groups.</td>
<td>Birmingham Settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community resilience and housing</td>
<td>Glasgow, Ardenglen Housing Association</td>
<td>18-Jan-17</td>
<td>Nine participants, all white British women aged 40+.</td>
<td>Ardenglen Housing Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth perspectives</td>
<td>London, Camden Town Hall</td>
<td>31-Jan-17</td>
<td>30 participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds, aged between 15- and 19-years-old. Schools were invited to partake on the basis that they had a free school meal intake of over 40 percent.</td>
<td>Greater London Authority (GLA) Fiona Tycross Assembly Member (AM)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Composition of the Citizens’ Economic Council

During the course of the Citizens Economic Council we asked our citizens to identify key themes and values by which they though our economy should be governed. These are laid out in the Economic Charter below. These values were created by councillors from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, age, socio-economic class and gender, and should be recognised as universal in the same way that the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights are. Labelling values as ‘British’ is not only false as many of these values are internationally recognised, but also counterproductive to creating a shared sense of identity; by trying to erect differences rather than appreciate commonalities this type of rhetoric establishes further division and segregation.

A citizens’ economy is one that secures:

**Fairness**
- Citizens are able to make an equal contribution to the economy, according to their means and their ability.
• Citizens have equality of opportunity within an economy.
• The gap between those citizens who can make contributions and those who have access to opportunities and those who do not is closed, through education, transparency and policy.

Social justice
Where no citizen fails to have their basic needs met, and vulnerable citizens are protected. We understand basic needs as:
- Food
- Shelter
- Healthcare
- Access to work
- Participation in society
- Education
• Ensures that everyone has what they need, everyone contributes and everyone’s contribution is valued equally.
• Creates policies that support the realisation of these goals, through increased government investment in the necessary infrastructure.
• Ensures equality of access to opportunities and confers rights upon citizens. It also confers responsibilities upon citizens.

Innovation for social good
• Involvement in innovation: Decisions made about the economy should provide many opportunities for all citizens to be involved in innovation. Economic decision-makers should have a strategy in place that allows all citizens to influence innovation.
• Innovation to secure social justice: Innovation should be led by and aim to contribute to social value and social need – understood as developing new ideas and ways of working that help communities and individuals to achieve social justice.
• Innovation has a purpose: Whether for profit or non-profit, organisations and businesses aim to secure innovation that promotes social justice.

Sustainability
• Economic sustainability: Sustainability should aim to secure a more resilient economy in the longer-term, able to withstand and weather crises in the financial system.
• Environmental sustainability: Economic decisions must consider long term impacts on the environment and society (communities and citizens), and take into account the indirect consequences of policy changes and external conditions or impacts eg technological change. Sustainability requires us to manage resources well for the long term; preserving our soil, water, forests and clean air for our basic needs.
• Social sustainability: Social sustainability seeks to build mixed and balanced communities – ensuring that citizens with diverse skills and a diverse workforce can live in any area of the country.

Governments should think beyond the constraints of short-term, political timeframes when formulating economic policy. Longer-term thinking must be secured and ensured by continuity of government policy, which seeks to protect the planet and people.

Citizen engagement and empowerment
• Citizens have the knowledge and capacity to positively contribute to society and the economy.
• Citizens have the information, knowledge, capacity, understanding and the opportunity to participate to the degree they wish, in local, regional and national economic policymaking.
Citizens are engaged and empowered to make decisions as communities in ways that affect them locally and nationally.

Citizens are able to participate in their workplaces and in their roles as consumers, suppliers and employees.

Devolved power and decision-making

- Stronger accountability between citizens and institutions should be created with national economic institutions directly responsive to, and supportive of local government, shifting away from a ‘top-down’ model of decision making.
- In turn, local government should be responsive to locally agreed priorities, generated by citizens.
- Decisions should be made at a local level where possible, seeking to re-establish trust.

Accountability and transparency

All institutions making economic decisions should have stronger accountability to citizens and provide mechanisms through which citizens can hold them to account for their decisions. Transparency underpins all of the values laid out in this Charter. Transparency means:

- Providing public access to unfiltered and straightforwardly presented information, through multiple channels and using a wide range of platforms (for example online, paper and so on)
- Information should be both understandable and trustworthy.
- Systems must encourage the transparency, impartiality and independent scrutiny of leaders within them. Those leaders should have clearly defined roles, and the appropriate knowledge and skills to make policy that is fit for purpose
- Having the appropriate legislative and regulatory framework in place to enable citizens to monitor performance against the Charter values, supported by an effective enforcement system.

7 September 2017