1. Civic engagement is a crucial element of citizenship, whether a limited personal involvement or a fuller more political involvement. It provides the opportunity to ensure local people can have, or grow, and maintain a sense of belonging to an area. Our local citizen surveys tell us that people do have a strong sense of belonging to the area, however if the area achieves the business and population growth we anticipate, we need to know and be able to ensure the national policies for civic engagement are clear, supportive and flexible for the future.

2. Understanding how society and its governance works, at a national and more pertinently at a local level, is important in comprehending what citizenship is and can be. Rather than promoting ceremonial expressions of citizenship, it feels more important to engender this understanding in individual citizens from an early age for those born here, or early in the introduction to the way of life in this country for those coming to live here. To make this effective, we feel it needs to be interactive and exciting, and not delivered as a dry lecture or instruction.

3. No specific comment.

4. In our experience involvement in local democracy (for example as Councillors) primarily attracts older citizens, yet we are aware young people are interested in local issues which affect them, and often express their views though not through the ballot box, partly because they feel they are not being listened to. Rationalising legislation so that young people's rights are age aligned would in part resolve this. Finding other ways of engaging people, for example through allowing electronic voting would potentially encourage a larger number of people to become involved. We are aware that the Youth Parliament engages with alternative voting methods. We would advocate further work to allow these methods to include other citizens.

5. As indicated at 2, good citizenship should be supported through education for all ages and abilities. The provision of this education should be sufficiently interesting so that it should not need to be 'compulsory' but should emphasise political participation as indicated. Key to this is citizens understanding the process, structure of, and how to influence or be part of decision making processes in this country.

6. We are aware of other schemes to encourage citizenship, such as for those on limited incomes being offered council tax reductions in return for voluntary work, or young peoples' 'dreamscheme' projects which offer rewards for socially beneficial activity. Such opportunities might extend to all citizens. Any such schemes need to focus on creating the conditions in which people see the benefit of becoming involved rather than being made compulsory. Compulsory involvement may have greater acceptance if it were a universal expectation as it is in parts of Europe, though we would question whether it is feasible to introduce that at this time.

7. If there is an accepted understanding of what civic engagement means for the individual, then it may be easier to engage organisations at all levels to support the general principles. In the same way that public engagement and supportive legislation has begun to change attitudes to certain equality issues and minorities, the process of encouraging a greater civic engagement will need a multi-faceted approach, but one which does not being with the imposition of legislation.

8. See the answers at 4, 5, 6 and 7.
9. Divisions in society and groups feeling 'left behind' has also become a multi-faceted problem with no specific answer. However there may be a crucial difference here: that engagement and conversation with particular groups could potentially elicit their views about what would enable better engagement for them. Of course this is said while also recognising that what people identify for themselves may not necessarily be the best method of engagement for them, and what actually is required is people skilled in engaging with these groups being given time to develop effective working relationships, which may take several years.

10. Diversity and integration are not visibly major issues in this area. To some extent the answer to this will lie in ensuring any educational approaches are diverse in their content and approach to delivery, and at the same time explicit about the expectations of citizens and their engagement with each other and society as a whole. If we recognise that some groups feel left out or left behind, the challenge is to ensure any new initiatives need to address the issue head on.

11 and 12 - no specific comment

8 September 2017