CELS Appendix 2 - OPM Consultation report - overview 19.12.14
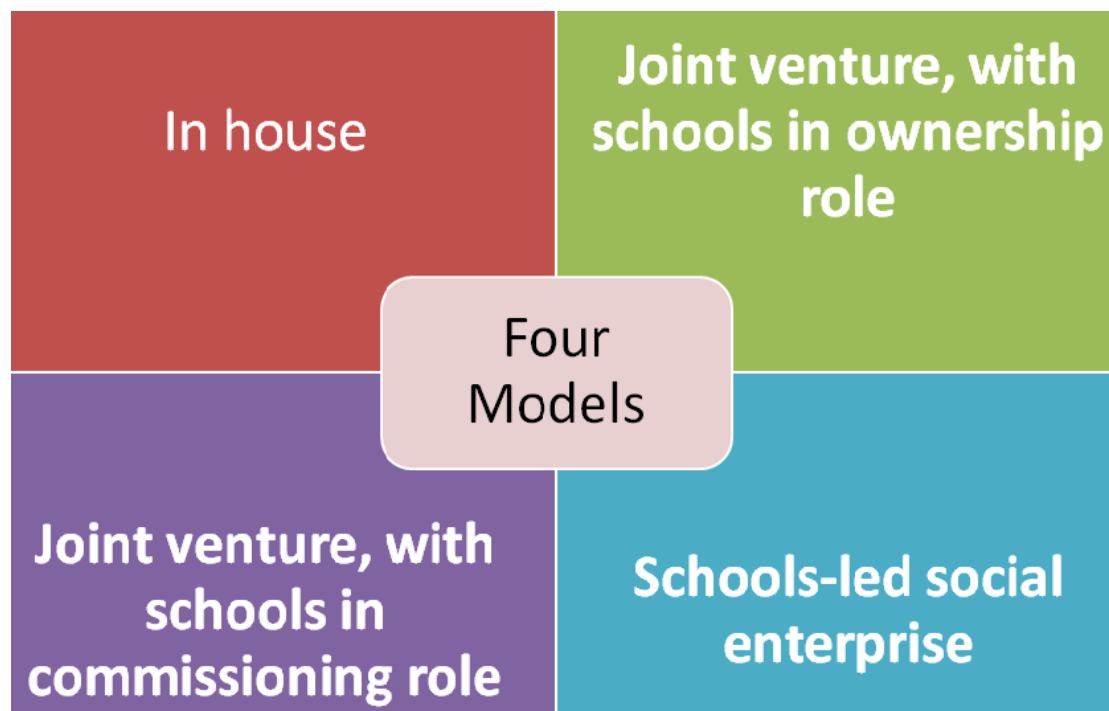
New delivery model consultation

London Borough of Barnet

19 December 2014

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Executive Summary

Background

In mid-2014, Barnet Council began a discussion and consultation with schools, staff, and other stakeholders about the challenges facing education support services and the potential ways of addressing these challenges. These include a shift towards academies and free schools, the need for budgetary savings.

Barnet has proposed that all remaining local education authority services, as currently provided by the council's Education and Skills Delivery Unit, should be included in the scope for consideration of a new delivery model. Any new model would deliver statutory services for the council and be commissioned by the council to provide certain services back to it, as well as providing traded services to schools.

The four models which have been proposed are:
1. In-house
2. Schools-led social enterprise
3. Joint venture, with schools in ownership role
4. Joint venture, with schools in commissioning role

The models under consideration will be evaluated by the project board against a common set of criteria to inform their recommendation to the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee in January 2015. The criteria and their relative weightings will be finalised based on the outcomes of consultation with schools and the public. This report details the findings of that consultation.

Two surveys and three focus groups were used to consult schools, parents, residents and parent-governors about the four models, services in scope and the evaluation criteria to be used to select the final model

Methodology

Three focus groups were held with different stakeholders in education and skills services: parents (8 participants), parents of children with special educational needs (10 participants), and parent-governors (8 participants). Each focus group ran for 90 minutes, covering:

• How important the participants thought each evaluation criteria was and why;

• Which model they favoured, why and what were their concerns;

• Whether participants felt the selected services were the appropriate ones to be in scope and why.

The process plan was designed in conjunction with the Residents' Survey to ensure the results could be compared.

The Residents' Survey was designed by Barnet council with input from OPM. The survey was open to all Barnet residents and ran for 8 weeks from the 7th October to 1st December 2014. In total, 123 people responded to the survey.

The Schools' Survey was designed by Barnet council. The survey was for Head teachers and Chairs of Governors of Barnet schools and was open from 10th November until the 2nd December 2014. The survey was available online and in a paper format. In total, there were 98 responses, 53 of which were joint responses from head teachers and the chair of governors, 26 were head teachers and 9 were chair of governors for the school.

Both surveys contained a mix of closed and open ended questions. The closed questions were analysed quantitatively using excel. The open questions were analysed by coding them thematically. Answers could receive multiple codes if appropriate.
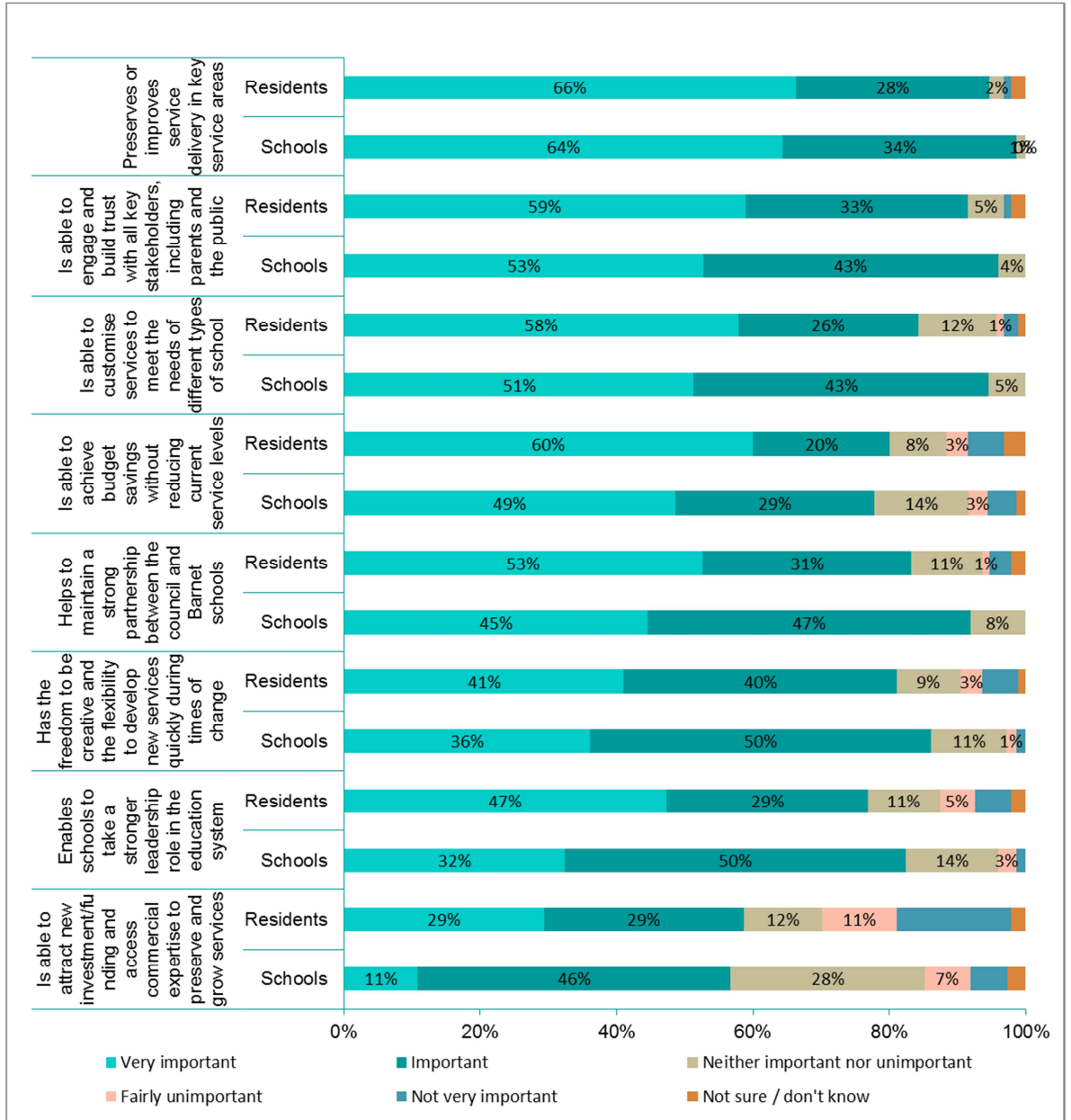
Key findings

Evaluation criteria

There appeared to be a lot of similarities across the two surveys and the focus groups regarding the importance of each evaluation criterion. Across all strands of the consultation a majority of people thought that all of the criteria were very important or important. However, some criteria were rated as more important than others. The most important criteria appeared to be:

- *Preserves or improves service delivery in key service areas* (Residents 94% and Schools 98% saying important or very important)

- *Is able to engage with and build trust with all key stakeholders, including parents and the public* (Residents 92% and Schools 96% saying important or very important)

- *Helps to maintain a strong partnership between the council and Barnet schools.* (Residents 84% and Schools 92% saying important or very important)

Most of the rest of the criteria had similar levels of reported importance, which made them difficult to order, although the criterion which had the least respondents saying it was important/very important was clearly:

- *Is able to attract new investment/funding and access commercial expertise to preserve and grow services* (Residents 58% and Schools 57%)

The surveys asked whether respondents felt there were additional criteria which should be considered. Throughout the focus group discussions a few themes came up which corresponded to some of the additional criteria comments from the surveys. These were:
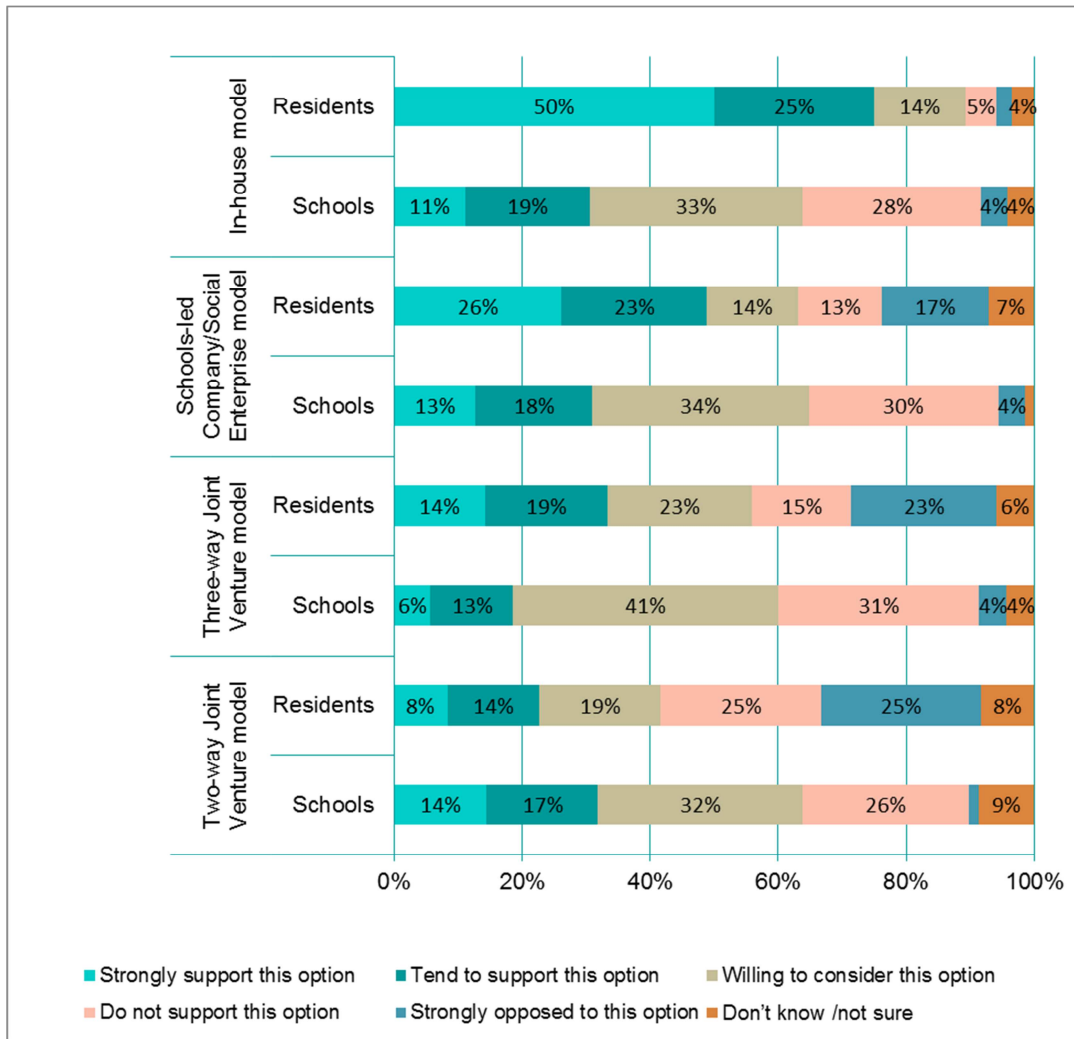
- *Schools' capacity to focus on delivering education should not be affected by their need to commission and manage service delivery through the chosen model.*

- *Schools should not be placed in financial risk by the delivery model.*

- *The decision should be made in favour of all schools equally.*

Models

Across the different consultation strands there was no clear consensus about the preferred model, with a range of responses from the different groups and the two surveys. Indeed, some of the conflicting findings from the same set of respondents meant there was no overall clear preference.

The focus groups found a split in preferences. The parent governors' group preferred the in-house model, a small majority of the parents' focus group preferred the two-way joint venture with commissioning model, and the SEN group was divided between those who thought in-house was best and those who thought it was a model which already had problems.

In the school survey respondents suggested that they would be willing to consider or support all of the options. Support for the in-house, schools –led enterprise and two-way joint venture model was very similar, 30%, 31% and 31% respectively. In contrast, the resident survey revealed a clear preference for the in-house model (51% strong support) with the two-way joint venture with commissioning being the least favoured option (6% strong support). This pattern was the same when 'tend to support' answers were included.

Concerns about the in-house model were primarily around whether this was a viable model given the lack of budget for education available to the council. From the school survey 12 comments concerned the viability of the model and another four the possibility of under-investment. These concerns were shared by the parents' focus group, who felt something new needed to be done to increase educational standards. There were some concerns across both surveys and the focus groups about whether the other models would place demands on schools which could take the focus away from delivering education. The school survey had 10 comments about the capacity of schools to implement the schools-led model. Resident survey comments revealed concerns about the cost of having third parties involved in the delivery model and their motivations for being involved.

Services in scope

The services in scope questions suggested a level of consensus between the surveys and focus groups, with the majority of services being agreed with being in scope.

Across all three focus groups, there were concerns about the SEN and welfare services being in a new delivery model. These concerns centred around how the quality of service delivery could be maintained if a 'business' person provided the service and about who would monitor the quality. In many of the discussions it appeared that participants tended to polarise their thoughts between the service staying in house and having a commercial third party involved in delivering the service.

With the exception of post 16 learning, the schools' survey showed a majority of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that the identified services should in scope for the planned changes. A majority of the school respondents strongly agreed with special educational needs (63%), school improvement (62%), vulnerable pupils (56%) and admissions (54%) being within scope for the new delivery model. There was a lower level of support for traded services (38% strongly agree and 83% net agree) and catering being in scope (27% strongly agree and 58% net agree).

The residents' survey showed a net agreement for all the services being in scope, with admissions (86% net agree), educational welfare (85%), educational psychology (88%), SEN (93%), schools improvement (90%) and post 16 learning (84%) having high levels of agreement. Only catering (42% strongly agree) and governor clerking (42% strongly agree) had minority levels of strong agreement with being in scope.

However, despite the high levels of agreement, there were concerns raised in both surveys around SEN, educational psychology and welfare services. The schools' survey contained 10 comments about the appropriateness of SEN and vulnerable pupils being dealt with outside of the local authority, since these are core services requiring knowledge and accountability. A further nine comments were made about the appropriateness of school admissions being passed to a delivery model which might have third party involvement or put admissions outside the control of the school.

Introduction to the report

Rationale for the research

In mid-2014, Barnet Council began a discussion and consultation with schools, staff, and other stakeholders about the challenges facing education support services and the potential ways of addressing these challenges.

Barnet has enjoyed a very successful schools system. Whilst it wants this success to continue, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed.

Firstly, whilst overall the proportion of good and outstanding schools remains high and among the top 10% in the country, the proportion of good or outstanding schools has fallen for those schools inspected under the new Ofsted framework. This is a pattern mirrored in local authorities across the country, and in Barnet's case the proportion has fallen to just over 70%, a performance in line with the England average.

Secondly, the educational landscape is changing. Over 70% of Barnet's secondary schools are now academies or Free Schools and at least 15% of primaries will be academies or Free Schools by 2016. These changes give individual schools even greater independence from the local authority than maintained schools, which have also gained increasing autonomy over recent years. Barnet needs to look at how it maintains a strong partnership that includes all schools in the borough and how services can be more responsive to the different needs of these different types of school.

Finally, the council's funding from central government will reduce significantly over the next five to six years, both as a result of on-going austerity measures and as more funding goes directly into schools, rather than to the council. This is why Barnet needs to review what services it can provide and look at opportunities to grow alternative sources of funding, in order to maintain strong and effective support services to schools.

Barnet has proposed that all remaining local education authority services, as currently provided by the council's Education and Skills Delivery Unit, should be included in the scope for consideration of a new delivery model. Any new model would deliver statutory services for the council and be commissioned by the council to provide certain services back to it, as well as providing traded services to schools.
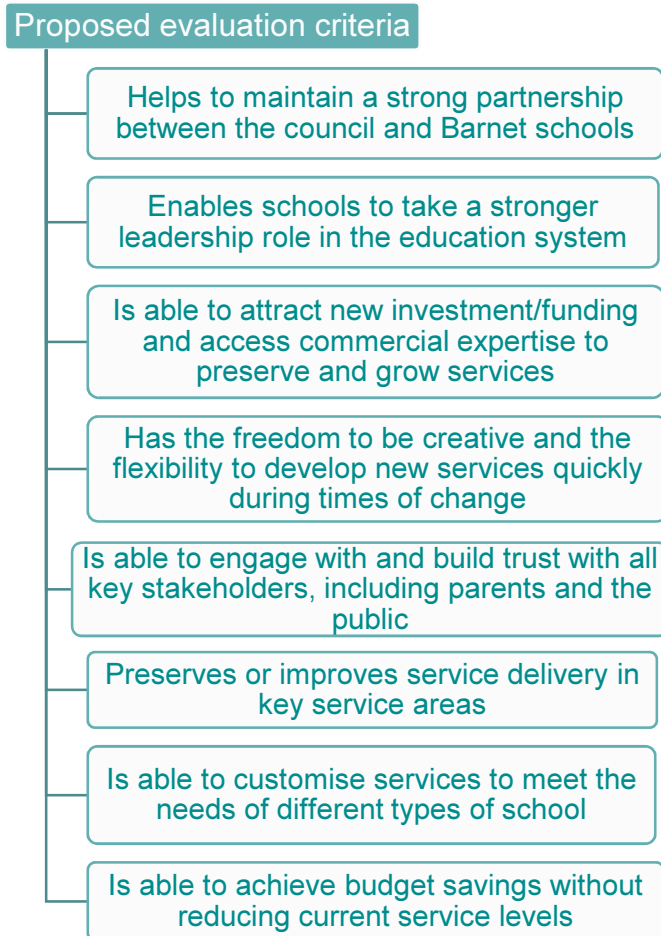
The four models which have been proposed are:
1. In-house
2. Schools-led social enterprise
3. Joint venture, with schools in ownership role
4. Joint venture, with schools in commissioning role

The services in scope are:

- School improvement
- Post-16 participation and skills
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Educational psychology team
- Education welfare service
- Admissions and school place planning
- Governor clerking service
- Catering service

The models under consideration will be evaluated by the project board against a common set of criteria to inform their recommendation to the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee in January 2015. The criteria and their relative weightings will be finalised based on the outcomes of consultation with schools and the public. This report details the findings of that consultation. Two surveys and three focus groups were used to consult schools, parents, residents and parent-governors about the four models, services in scope and the evaluation criteria to be used to select the final model. The proposed evaluation criteria discussed in the consultation are:

Proposed evaluation criteria

- Helps to maintain a strong partnership between the council and Barnet schools
- Enables schools to take a stronger leadership role in the education system
- Is able to attract new investment/funding and access commercial expertise to preserve and grow services
- Has the freedom to be creative and the flexibility to develop new services quickly during times of change
- Is able to engage with and build trust with all key stakeholders, including parents and the public
- Preserves or improves service delivery in key service areas
- Is able to customise services to meet the needs of different types of school
- Is able to achieve budget savings without reducing current service levels

How to read this report

This report contains an overall analysis of all the methodological elements used in the survey, providing an overview of the results for the evaluation criteria, services in scope and models. Other questions covered by the surveys have not been discussed in depth.

Methodology

Residents Survey	Schools Survey

Parent Governors Focus Group	Parents Focus Group	SEN Parents Focus Group
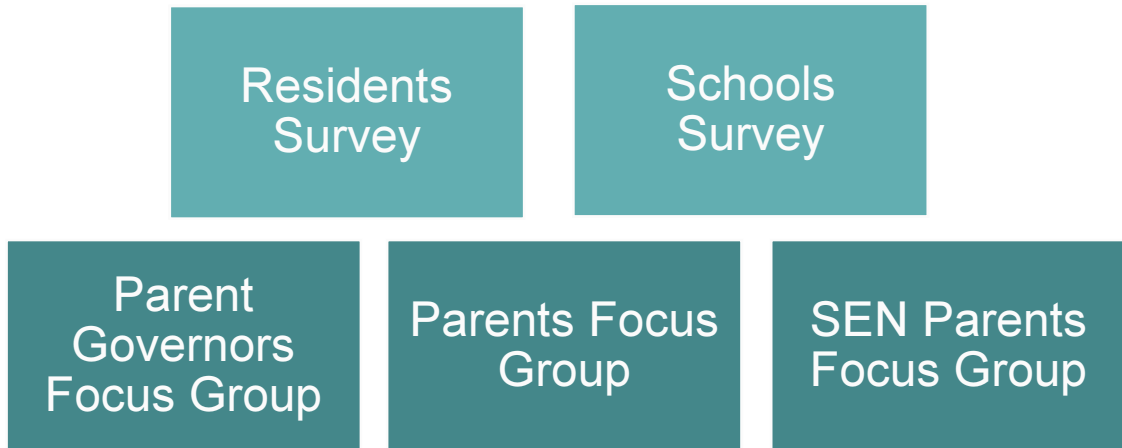
Residents' and Schools' Surveys

The Residents' Survey was designed by Barnet council with input from OPM. The survey was open to all Barnet residents and ran for 8 weeks from the 7th October to 1st December 2014. The survey was available online on the engage Barnet website (http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/consultation-team/future-education-skills/consult_view) and in other formats including paper versions or easy read documents. The survey was publicised through a variety of channels including the front page of the council's website, social media and through school newsletters. In total, 123 people responded to the survey. A further survey response was received after the closing date and when the analysis was completed. Since the answers were broadly in line with the overall findings from the survey and therefore we have not re-calculated the results to include this one response. It should be noted that the findings of the survey cannot be seen to be statistically representative of the residents of Barnet as a whole.

The Schools' Survey was designed by Barnet council. The survey was for Head teachers and Chairs of Governors of Barnet schools and was open from 10th November until the 30th November 2014. In order to maximise the number of responses, the closing date was subsequently extended to 2nd December 2014. The survey was available online and in a paper format.

In total, there were 98 responses, 53 of which were joint responses from head teachers and the chair of governors, 26 were head teachers and 9 were chair of governors for the school.

Both surveys contained a mix of closed and open ended questions. The closed questions were analysed quantitatively using excel. The open questions were analysed by coding them thematically. Answers could receive multiple codes if appropriate. Not all questions were answered by all respondents, therefore percentages are of the number answering each question not the respondents overall.

Focus groups

Three focus groups were held with different stakeholders in education and skills services: parents, parents of children with special educational needs, and parent-governors. Each focus group ran for 90 minutes, covering:

- How important the participants thought each evaluation criteria was and why;

- Which model they favoured, why and what were their concerns;

- Whether participants felt the selected services were the appropriate ones to be in scope and why.

The process plan was designed in conjunction with the Residents' Survey to ensure the results could be compared. The process plan is in Appendix 1. This was a lot of information to cover within the 90 minutes, and discussions around each element had to be kept brief to ensure everything was covered.

Recruitment of the focus groups

The focus groups were recruited in three ways. The parents' focus group was recruited by a specialised recruitment company, Plus Four, in line with a quota developed and agreed with Barnet Council. The quota was designed to try to include as many different voices in the group as possible. The recruitment was conducted on-street. Eight parents attended the evening focus group. The recruitment quota is in Appendix 2.

The parent-governor focus group was recruited by email. An email was sent by Barnet Council to their list of parent-governors, who were asked to respond to OPM directly – thus ensuring participants remained anonymous to the council. A total of 23 parent-governors responded. Twelve were invited to attend the evening focus group, with eight attending. The twelve were selected to represent a mix of primary and secondary schools across Barnet.

The parents of children with special educational needs (which we shall call the SEN focus group throughout the report) were recruited through a Barnet-based support group, pp4danBarnet. The parents covered a mix of school levels and need types. Ten parents of children with special educational needs attended the daytime focus group.

Materials and facilitation

Focus group participants were provided with the detailed document available to survey respondents written by Barnet Council which explained the rationale for change, the evaluation criteria and services in scope. Additionally it explained the proposed models, their pros and cons, and provided comparisons of key elements of the four models. Participants were asked to read the document in advance since there was not time available in the session to read the materials in full.

Additionally, Barnet Council provided OPM with some FAQs and further information so the facilitators could answer some of the participants' questions. OPM debated with Barnet Council whether an expert should attend the focus groups to answer questions. The decision was taken not to have an expert available, to ensure independence of the sessions, protect participant anonymity and reduce the potential to lose the session to Q&As. This meant a trade-off between independence and having someone available to answer questions in depth. Because of this participants did have some questions which the facilitators did not have enough in depth knowledge to answer fully.

The materials used in the focus group were taken from the consultation document and aligned to the Residents' Survey. This ensured the consultation process was not contaminated with information which had not been provided by Barnet Council and increased the ability of the separate elements of the methodology to be compared.

Analysis

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Facilitators then analysed the transcripts for key findings from each focus group before collating findings across the groups. Separately, the transcripts were coded in line with the themes identified in the surveys' open questions to highlight common concerns and recognised benefits around the evaluation criteria and models.

Part 1: Overall findings

Evaluation criteria

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Proposed evaluation criteria

    Helps to maintain a strong partnership
    between the council and Barnet schools

    Enables schools to take a stronger
    leadership role in the education system

    Is able to attract new investment/funding
    and access commercial expertise to
    preserve and grow services

    Has the freedom to be creative and the
    flexibility to develop new services quickly
    during times of change

    Is able to engage with and build trust with all
    key stakeholders, including parents and the
    public

    Preserves or improves service delivery in
    key service areas

    Is able to customise services to meet the
    needs of different types of school

    Is able to achieve budget savings without
    reducing current service levels
```

Introduction

The survey respondents and focus group participants were asked to rate how important they felt each of the evaluation criteria to be. Additionally, they were asked if they had any other criteria which they felt should be considered. In coding the responses, some common themes arose across the different methodologies which related to whether the evaluation criteria were missing any important factors.

Summary of findings

There appeared to be a lot of similarities across the two surveys and the focus groups regarding the importance of each evaluation criterion. Across all strands of the consultation a majority of people thought that all of the criteria were very important or important. However, some criteria were rated as more important than others. The most important criteria appeared to be:

- *Preserves or improves service delivery in key service areas* (Residents 94% and Schools 98% saying important or very important)

- *Is able to engage with and build trust with all key stakeholders, including parents and the public* (Residents 92% and Schools 96% saying important or very important)

- *Helps to maintain a strong partnership between the council and Barnet schools.* (Residents 84% and Schools 92% saying important or very important)

Most of the rest of the criteria had similar levels of reported importance, which made them difficult to order, although the criterion which had the least respondents saying it was important/very important was clearly:

- *Is able to attract new investment/funding and access commercial expertise to preserve and grow services* (Residents 58% and Schools 57%)

However, there was some variance across the focus groups about the importance of this criterion, with the Parents focus group viewing it as a valuable criterion, and the other focus groups being concerned about what strings may be attached to the funding.

Similarly, whilst '*achieving budget savings without reducing the level of service'* was seen as being an important criterion, the focus groups were concerned about whether this could be achieved in a way which did not place pressure on staff.

The surveys asked whether respondents felt there were additional criteria which should be considered. Throughout the focus group discussions a few themes came up which corresponded to some of the additional criteria comments from the surveys. These were:
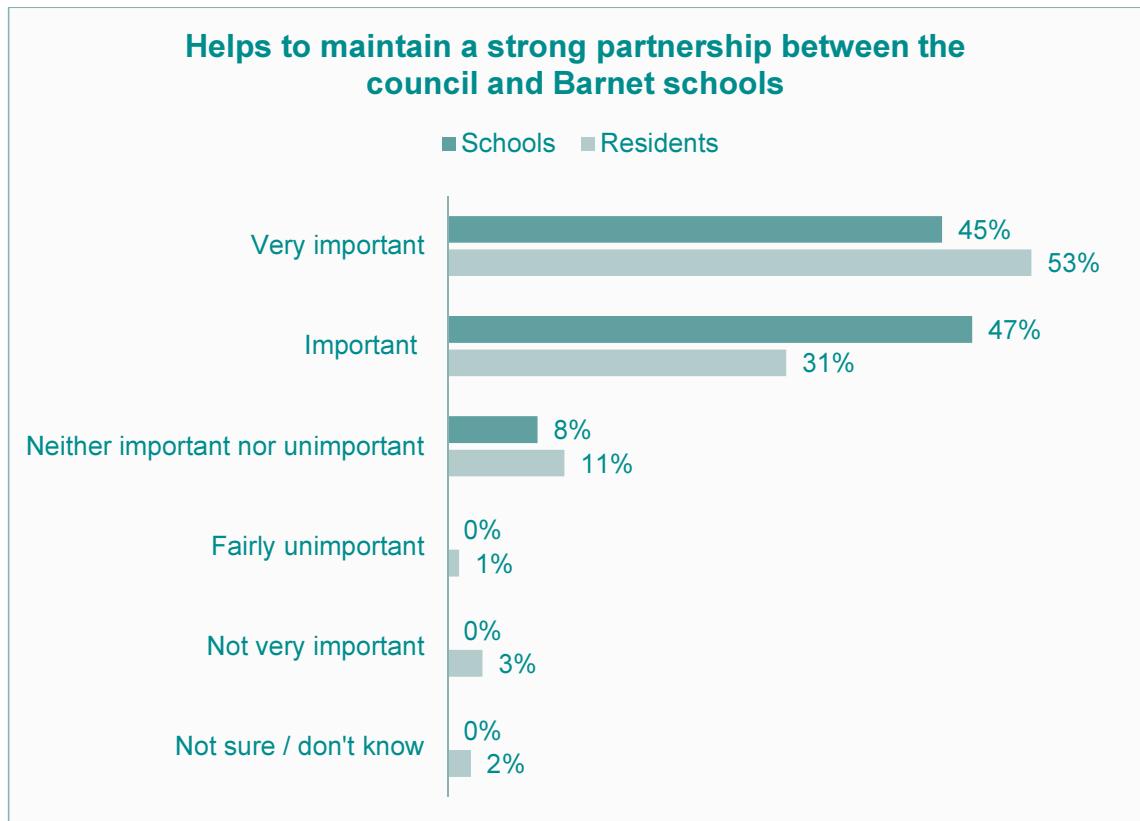
- *Schools' capacity to focus on delivering education should not be affected by their need to commission and manage service delivery through the chosen model.*

- *Schools should not be placed in financial risk by the delivery model.*

- *The decision should be made in favour of all schools equally.*

Additionally, two areas of concern were highlighted across the surveys and focus groups:

- *Whether the information provided about the evaluation criteria was balanced and in enough depth to allow respondents to make an informed decision.*

- *The ethics and implications of involving commercial interests in the delivery of educational services.*

Findings by criterion

1. Helps to maintain a strong partnership between the council and Barnet schools

Helps to maintain a strong partnership between the council and Barnet schools

■Schools ■Residents

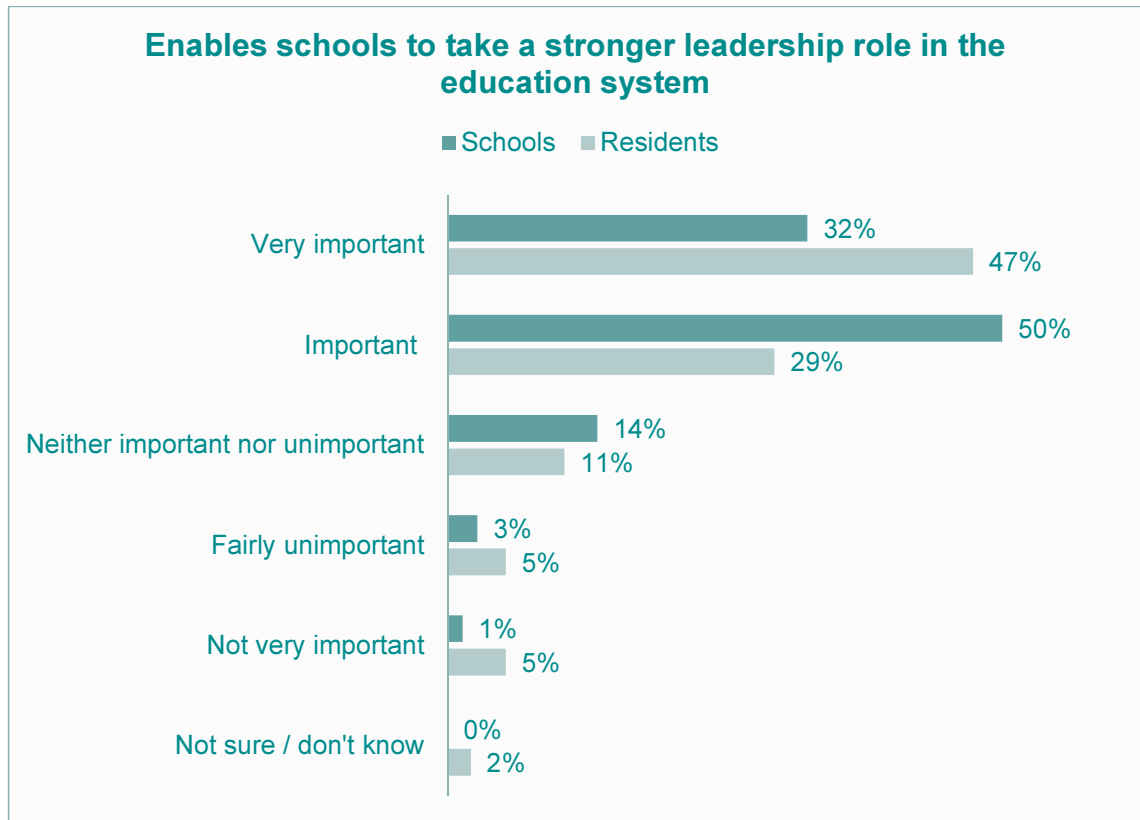| Category	Schools	Residents
Very important	45%	53%
Important	47%	31%
Neither important nor unimportant	8%	11%
Fairly unimportant	0%	1%
Not very important	0%	3%
Not sure / don't know	0%	2%

Across the three elements of the consultation, this appeared to be one of the most important criteria. 92% school respondents said this criterion was either important or very important and 84% of the resident respondents.

All three focus groups felt this was an important criterion. This was because having the partnership in place had the following benefits

- supports accountability and oversight of education provision;

- the experience and expertise of schools and the council is put to good use;

- reduces the potential for a fragmentation of education provision.

2. Enables schools to take a stronger leadership role in the education system

Enables schools to take a stronger leadership role in the education system

■ Schools   ■ Residents

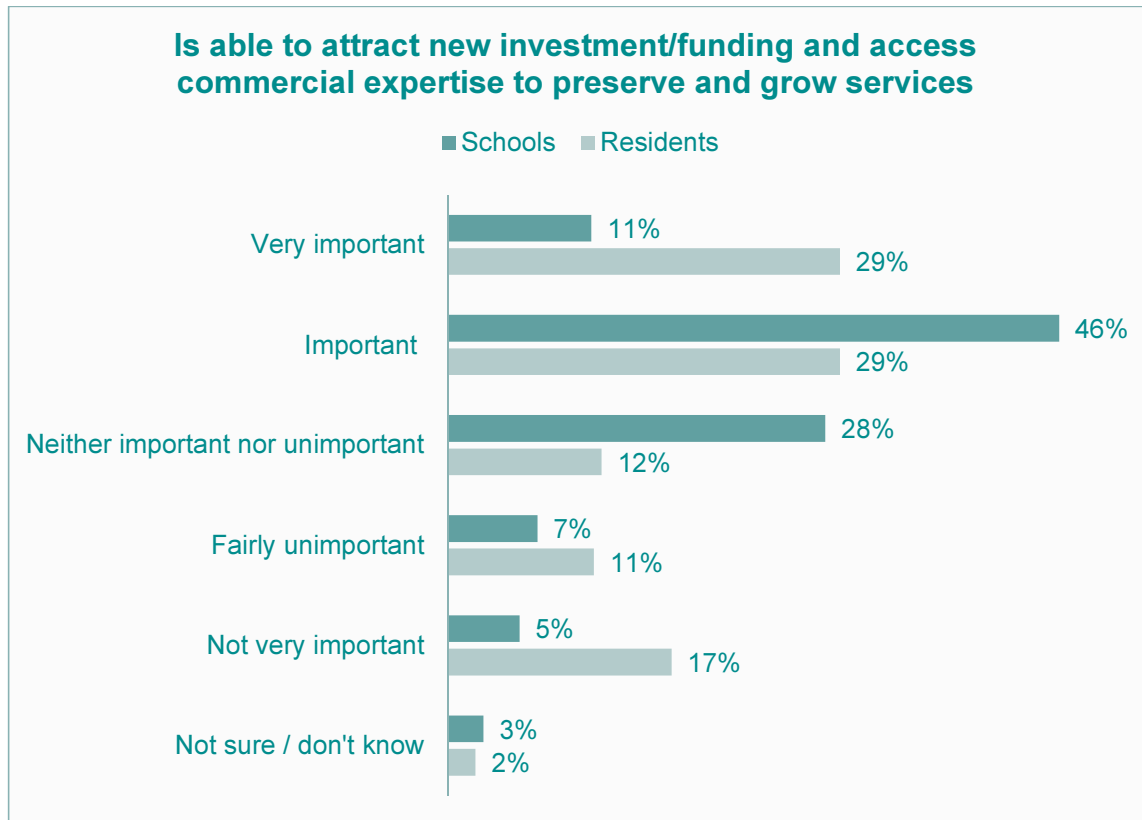| Category	Schools	Residents
Very important	32%	47%
Important	50%	29%
Neither important nor unimportant	14%	11%
Fairly unimportant	3%	5%
Not very important	1%	5%
Not sure / don't know	0%	2%

Whilst not rated as one of the most important criteria, 82% school respondents and 76% resident respondents felt this was either an important or very important criterion.

Most of the participants in all three focus groups felt this was an important criterion. SEN parents in particular supported any model which gave school leaders greater influence and voice and which allowed them to focus on delivering the best possible education service to families.

Across the three focus groups there were concerns that school leaders might be diverting their focus from delivering education towards running a business. Some also highlighted the fact that schools in the borough might engage with the new model to different degrees.

3. Is able to attract new investment/funding and access commercial expertise to preserve and grow services

Is able to attract new investment/funding and access commercial expertise to preserve and grow services

■ Schools ■ Residents

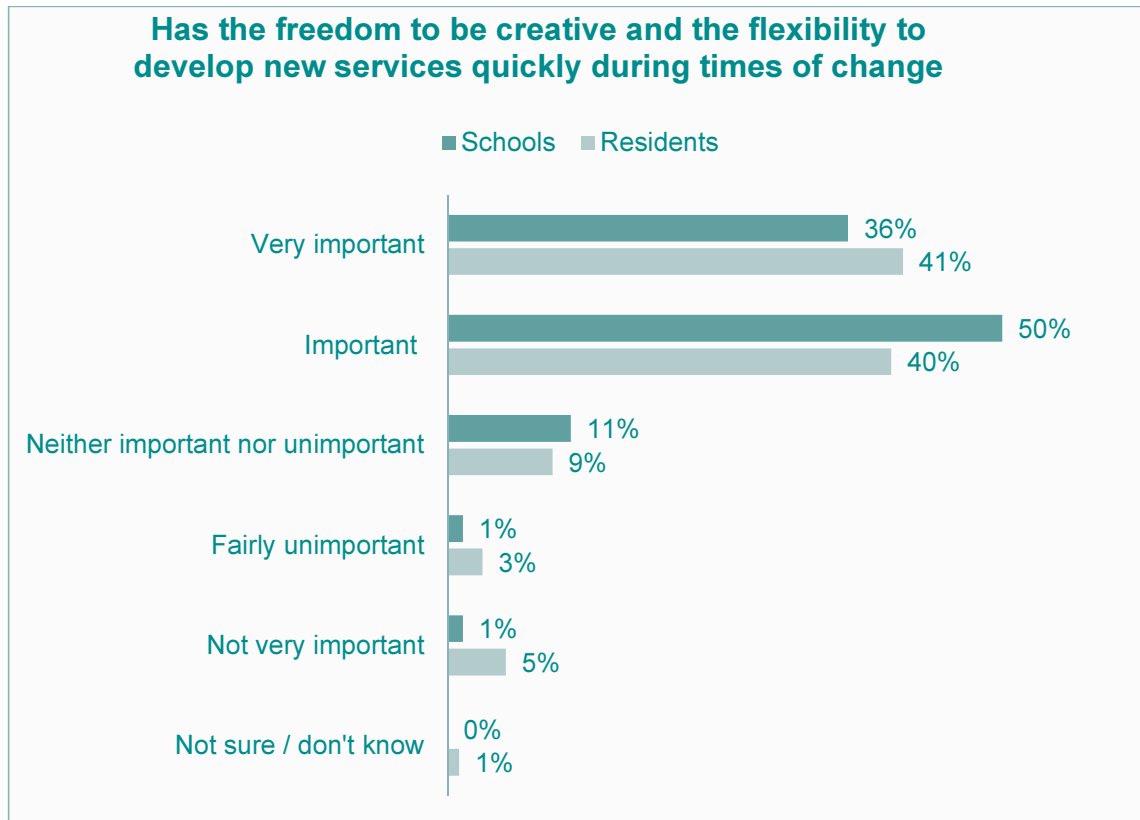|	Schools	Residents
Very important	11%	29%
Important	46%	29%
Neither important nor unimportant	28%	12%
Fairly unimportant	7%	11%
Not very important	5%	17%
Not sure / don't know	3%	2%

This was the most disputed of all the criteria. Whilst it still had a majority of respondents from both surveys stating they thought it was very/important (57% schools and 58% residents), only 11% of school respondents said it was 'very important'.

There was no consensus across the focus groups on this criterion. The parent groups thought this was a valuable criterion and were interested to know what kinds of new skills and expertise would be brought to the table by having these new providers involved.

The SEN parents group did not think this was a suitable criterion because of concerns about there being 'strings attached' to external funding and because people with business backgrounds might have the wrong kinds of values and motivations. The Parent Governors group also raised concerns about this criterion, including the fact that commercial expertise presented an inherent bias toward selecting particular models.

4. Has the freedom to be creative and the flexibility to develop new services quickly during times of change
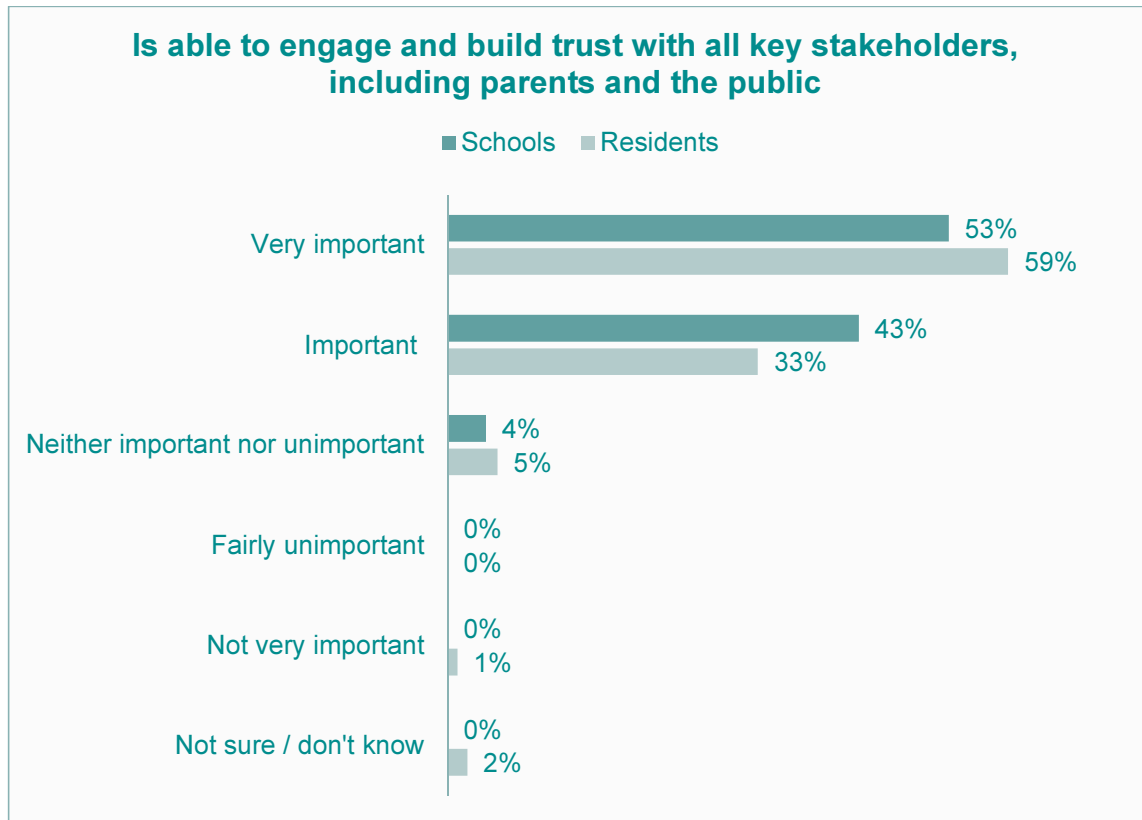
Has the freedom to be creative and the flexibility to develop new services quickly during times of change

■ Schools ■ Residents

	Schools	Residents
Very important	36%	41%
Important	50%	40%
Neither important nor unimportant	11%	9%
Fairly unimportant	1%	3%
Not very important	1%	5%
Not sure / don't know	0%	1%

Whilst rated as being slightly less important than other evaluation criteria, this criterion was still viewed as very/important by 86% school respondents and 81% resident respondents.

There was some agreement in the Parent focus group that this criterion was important because schools can be hampered by councils in their ability to be dynamic and flexible during times of change. Some also welcomed the opportunity for a third party to introduce creativity and new ways of working.

In the other two focus groups, participants were more ambivalent about this criterion and they raised concerns and risks about the possible implications about what these freedoms might make possible. Both also felt that the wording was too vague to reach a firm position.
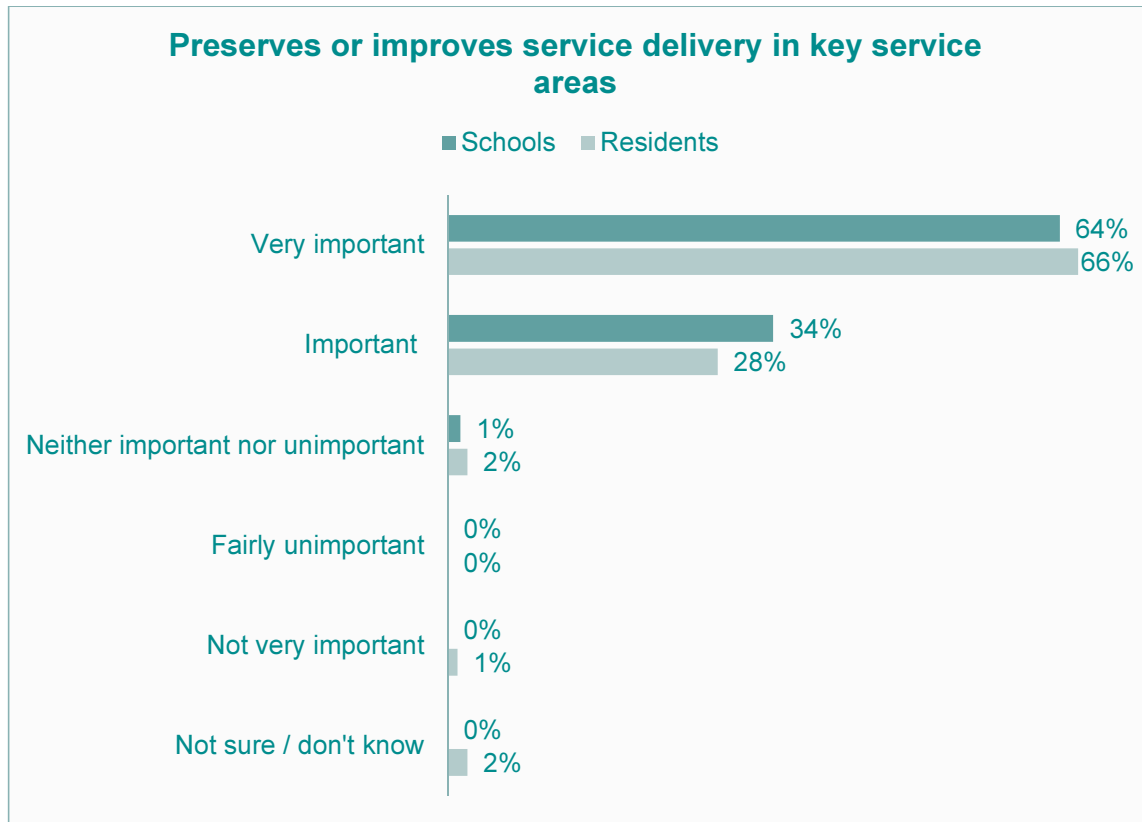
5. Is able to engage with and build trust with all key stakeholders, including parents and the public

Is able to engage and build trust with all key stakeholders, including parents and the public

■ Schools ■ Residents

	Schools	Residents
Very important	53%	59%
Important	43%	33%
Neither important nor unimportant	4%	5%
Fairly unimportant	0%	0%
Not very important	0%	1%
Not sure / don't know	0%	2%

Across the three elements of the consultation, this appeared to be one of the most important criteria. 86% schools respondents said this criterion was either important or very important and 92% of the resident respondents.

All of the focus groups agreed this was a very important criterion. This criterion was felt to capture the principles of inclusion and transparency which were felt to be key to the delivery model. A number of participants across the group felt that parents and the public were particularly important sets of stakeholders to engage throughout the process.

6. *Preserves or improves service delivery in key service areas*

Preserves or improves service delivery in key service areas

■ Schools   ■ Residents

	Schools	Residents
Very important	64%	66%
Important	34%	28%
Neither important nor unimportant	1%	2%
Fairly unimportant	0%	0%
Not very important	0%	1%
Not sure / don't know	0%	2%

Across the three elements of the consultation, this appeared to be one of the most important criteria. 98% school respondents said this criterion was either important or very important and 94% of the resident respondents.

All of the focus groups felt this criterion was vital and that the change to a new delivery model would only be valid if it achieved this. The Parents focus group felt that 'improves' was more important than 'preserves' and they questioned what was included under the definition of key service. The SEN Parents wanted to know how any model would achieve this criterion and they sought reassurance that it would not have negative implications further down the line.

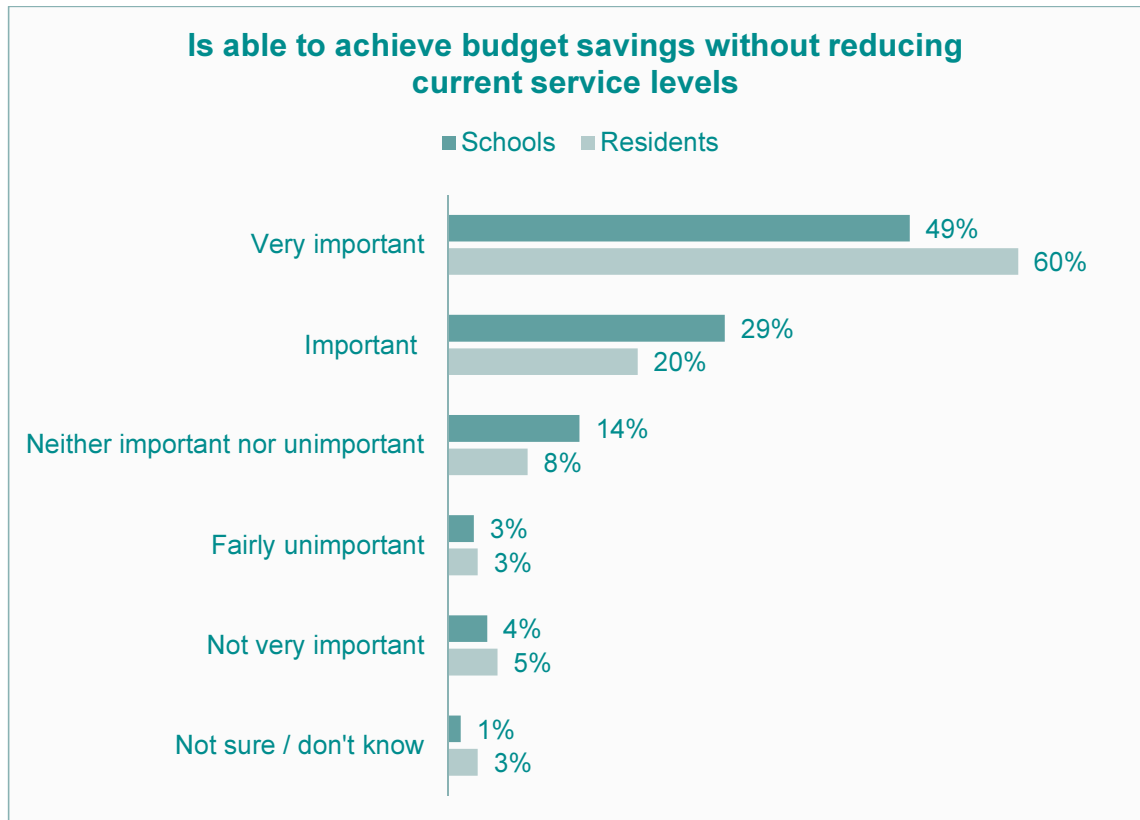## 7. Is able to customise services to meet the needs of different types of school
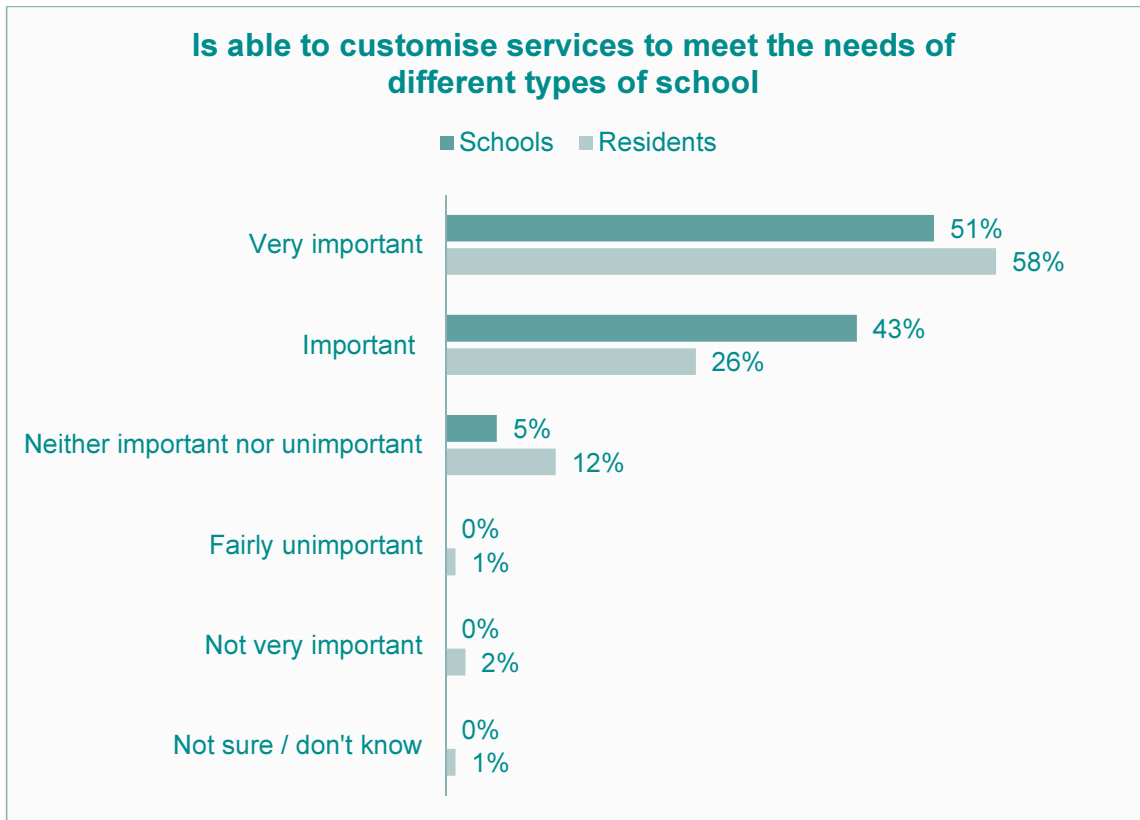
This was an important criterion for the school respondents with 94% saying it was either important or very important. The residents' survey respondents viewed it as being slightly less important, although it was still highly rated at 84% net important.

Two focus groups (SEN parents and parent-governors) thought this was an important criterion, with the SEN Parents in particular focussed on the fact that schools vary greatly across the borough and they have to deliver personalised services to their students and families.

In contrast, the Parents Group thought this criterion was a bit less important than some of the others, but still necessary to delivering quality services.

8. Is able to achieve budget savings without reducing current service levels

Is able to achieve budget savings without reducing current service levels

■ Schools ■ Residents

Category	Schools	Residents
Very important	49%	60%
Important	29%	20%
Neither important nor unimportant	14%	8%
Fairly unimportant	3%	3%
Not very important	4%	5%
Not sure / don't know	1%	3%

This was a somewhat disputed criterion. There was strong support for the criterion, with 78% schools and 80% residents responding that this was either important or very important.

All of the focus groups thought this was, in principle, an important criterion. Indeed, several participants suggested that this was the whole point of the exercise, so it was self-evidently an important criterion. However, two of the groups (Parent Governors and SEN) questioned whether it was attainable without putting undue stress on the staff responsible for delivering services. Because of this, some in the Parent Governor group felt this was the worst criterion on the list.

Models

Introduction

The survey respondents and focus group participants were asked to state how much they supported each delivery model option. Additionally, the schools survey asked respondents how willing they would be to consider investing in each option.

The school survey, as a survey of key stakeholders, asked for detailed comments about each option. The resident survey asked for overall comments on the options, with the focus groups providing in depth probing of each model to understand key user groups' views. Because of this, it has proved difficult to separate out residents survey comments about the involvement of third parties in the two joint venture options.

Summary

Across the different consultation strands there was no clear consensus about the preferred model, with a range of responses from the different groups and the two surveys. Indeed, some of the answers from the same set of respondents proved to lack an overall clear preference.

School survey
In the school survey respondents suggested that they would be willing to consider or support all of the options. Support for the in-house, schools –led enterprise and two-way joint venture model was very similar, 30%, 31% and 31% respectively. When asked to state a preference, the two-way joint venture (32%) is the first preference of slightly more respondents than the other models.
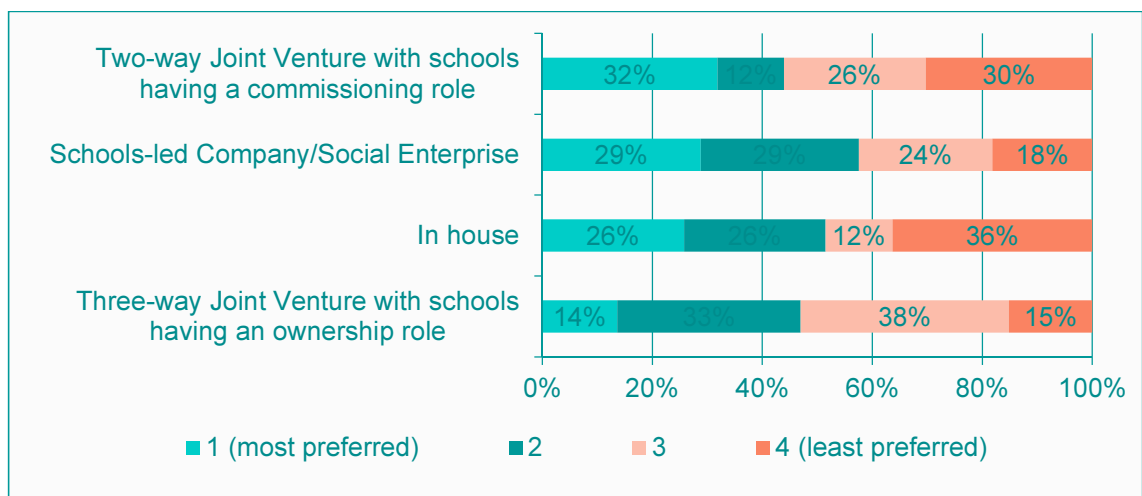
However, when second preferences are taken into consideration the two-way joint venture model becomes the least preferred (44%) with the schools-led social enterprise becoming the most favoured (58%), with the in-house model being next (52%). This changes again when third preferences are taken into account, whereby the in house model becomes the least favourite. In short, the school survey did not reveal a clear finding about the favoured model.

Resident survey

In contrast, the resident survey revealed a clear preference for the in-house model (51% strong support) with the two-way joint venture with commissioning being the least favoured option (6% strong support). This pattern was the same when 'tend to support' answers were included.

Focus groups

The focus groups also found a split in preferences. The parent governors' group preferred the in-house model, a small majority of the parents' focus group preferred the two-way joint venture with commissioning model, and the SEN group was divided between those who thought in-house was best and those who thought it was a model which already had problems.

Concerns about the in-house model were primarily around whether this was a viable model given the lack of budget for education available to the council. From the school survey 12 comments concerned the viability of the model and another four the possibility of under-investment. These concerns were shared by the parents' focus group, who felt something new needed to be done to increase educational standards. There were some concerns across both surveys and the focus groups about whether the other models would place demands on schools which could take the focus away from delivering education. The school survey had 10 comments about the capacity of schools to implement the schools-led model. Resident survey comments revealed concerns about the cost of having third parties involved in the delivery model and their motivations for being involved.

It is important to say that the focus groups and some survey respondents highlighted the need for more information to make fully informed decisions.

Model specific findings

In-house model
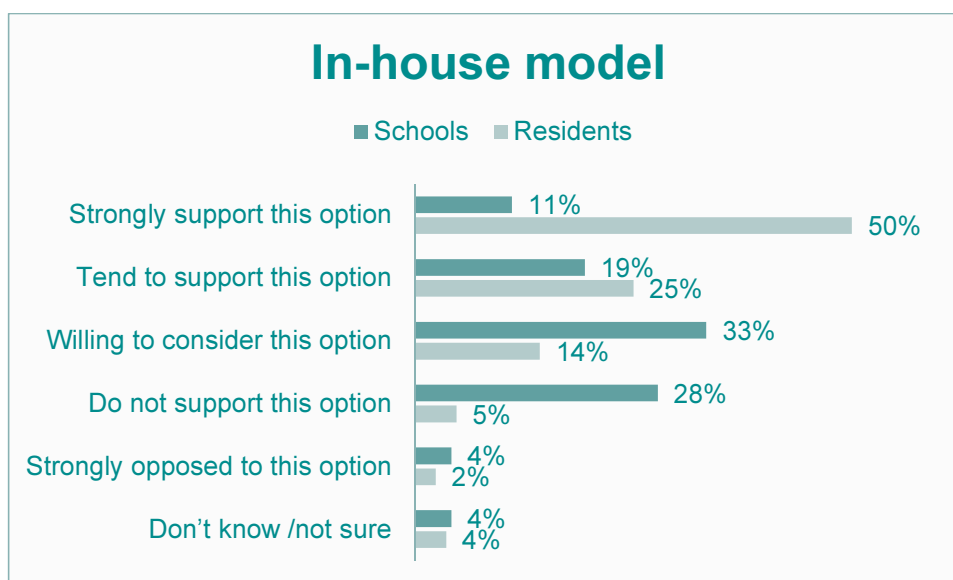
The chart above reveals a stark difference between the opinions of the school and resident survey respondents. Half of the residents responding strongly supported the in-house model as opposed to only 11% of the schools respondents. The difference may be explained by the comments the school respondents made, with concerns about the in-house model being primarily around whether this was a viable model given the lack of budget for education available to the council. From the school survey 12 comments concerned the viability of the model and another four the possibility of under-investment.

"Unsure about the commitment or capacity for in-house model to work"

"This model is not sustainable and would leave the local authority and therefore schools in a vulnerable position. Barnet already seem to be behind other local authorities in transforming school improvement and education service and now is the time for change."

In contrast, five of the resident survey respondents suggested keeping things as they are.

"Why not look at improving the current model instead of giving it a new overhaul which will cost money anyway? Hence more money will be spent on consultants and outside companies and not the actual services themselves."

When asked about their preferred model, 26% of the school survey respondents listed it as their preferred option, whereas as 36% said it was their least preferred option.

The parent governors' focus group had a preference for the in-house model. Their primary reason was because under the other models school staff would have to divert

their attention and energy away from delivering education and towards commissioning and or running an education and skills business. The parents' focus group seemed to be least in favour of the in-house model because they felt something new needed to be done to increase educational standards. The SEN group was split between those who preferred the in-house model because it was based on a relationship with councils rather than business, and those who felt this model had serious failings currently.

Schools-led company/social enterprise
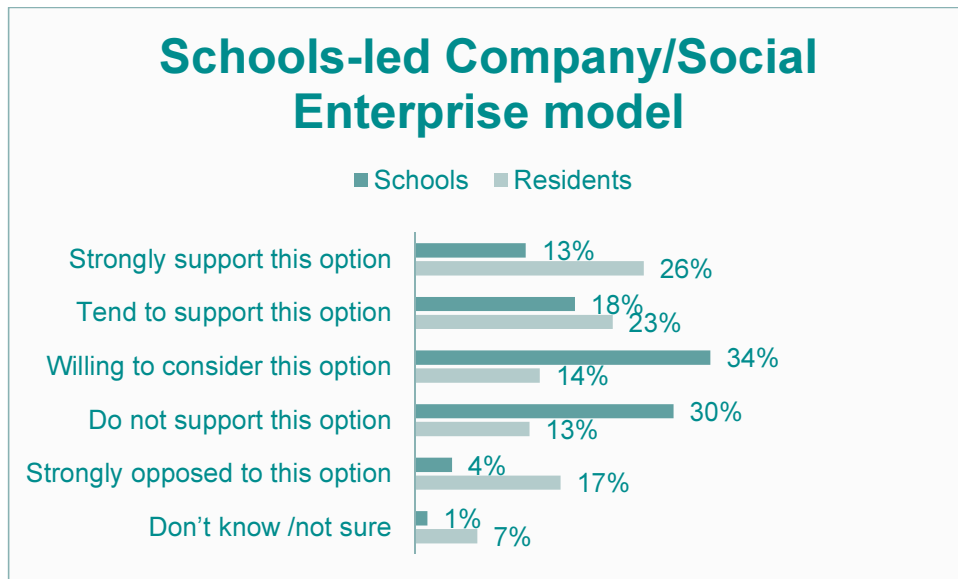
The school survey respondents strongly/tend to support this model as much as the two-way joint venture model, with a net score of 31% (the in-house model had a net score of 30%, a difference which is not statistically significant for this number of respondents). When first and second preferences were analysed, this model was the preference; although again, the differences have no statistical significance. The open comments reveal the primary concern of respondents to be the demands placed on schools which could take the focus away from delivering education. The school survey had 10 comments about the capacity of schools to implement the schools-led model.

"I think this would take up too much time and keep staff away from the core purpose of being in a school."

"Head teachers already have an enormous work load. A commitment such as this may have an adverse impact on schools."

However, five school survey respondents highlighted the benefits which could be gained from the schools-led company, including the potential for schools to combine their experience.

'This is potentially an exciting model which could maximise the sharing of expertise in schools in Barnet'

The resident survey respondents had a net support score of 59%. This made the schools led social enterprise the second most favoured model for the respondents. Whilst the comments from the residents survey highlighted concerns about the capacity of schools to be engaged in models without losing focus on education, only one respondent made a model-specific comment.

"Danger, if entirely school led, it will be those schools who are able to shout the loudest who drive the agenda and get the most resources. There needs to be checks and balances, which is why if the services are in-house or run by a joint enterprise, this may be a safer option in relation to ensuring all children, including the most vulnerable, receive what they need."

The SEN parents' focus group saw a number of benefits in both the in-house model and the schools-led social enterprise. The parents' focus group felt that forming a new company could reduce 'red tape' and allow for greater freedom; this was seen as a positive by several in the group. The group liked the fact that under this model schools would be more involved in leading and influencing the new services, but pointed out that it would not benefit from commercial awareness.

Third party involvement

Much of the discussion in the focus groups and many of the resident survey comments talk about 'third party involvement' rather than a particular model. Therefore, those comments are covered here.

Responses to the resident survey question: 'As long as the quality of the service is good, would you have any concerns if a third party organisation is involved in the delivery of these education support services, either as a partner to the council or as a partner to both the council and the schools?' revealed high levels of concern.
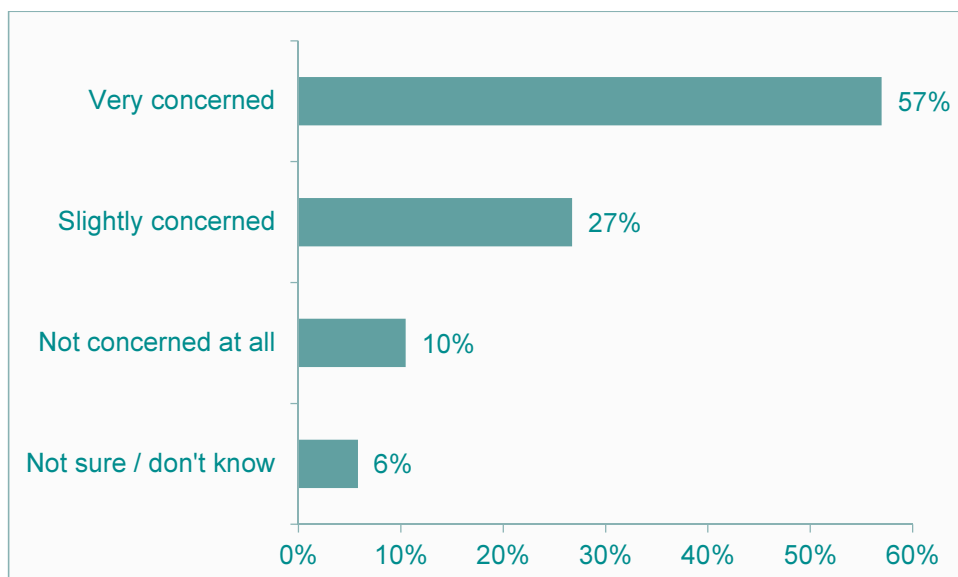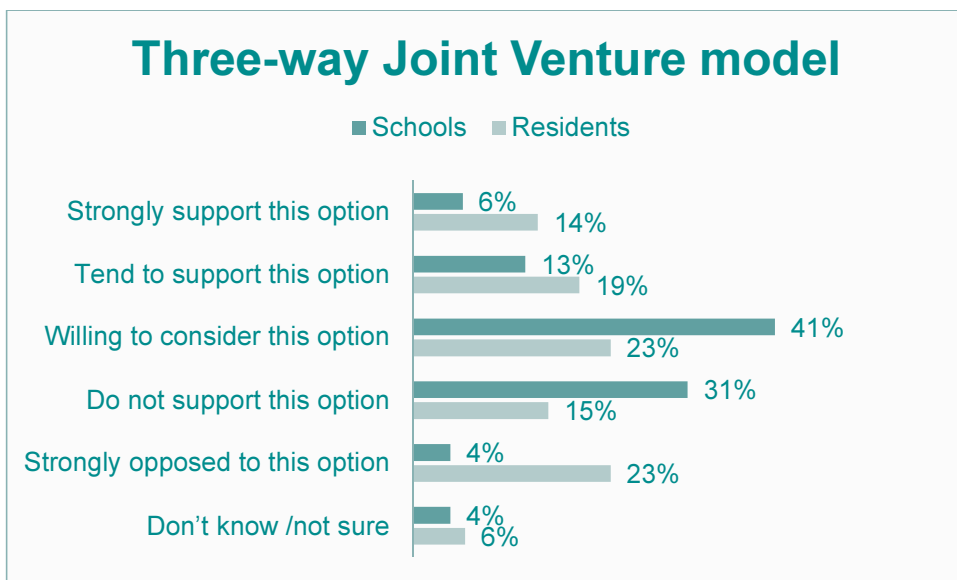
57% respondents said they would be very concerned and a further 27% said they would be slightly concerned. 26 respondents provided open answers about the reasons for their concern, highlighting issues around business models being used in education, the potential quality of the services, and a lack of trust, accountability or responsibility.

"If that third party went into administration where does the burden then lie to pick up the pieces? Will the pressure be then put upon schools and teachers where they already have a demanding time keeping up with the changes in the educational landscape, with minimal time and not always support that should be provided."

"Any involvement of parties other than schools and the Council in the running of the Borough's education services will only lead to monies for education being siphoned off from the system to pay for new payroll costs or to provide profits to investors."

The parents' focus group felt that third party involvement could bring experience and much needed investment. In contrast, many in the SEN focus group pointed to risks and downsides associated with a model which involved a third party provider, such as: there could be a conflict between making good business decisions versus decisions that would benefit the quality and level of education services and services could become less accountable to the families who use them.

Three-way joint venture with ownership

Three-way Joint Venture model

■ Schools ■ Residents

Option	Schools	Residents
Strongly support this option	6%	14%
Tend to support this option	13%	19%
Willing to consider this option	41%	23%
Do not support this option	31%	15%
Strongly opposed to this option	4%	23%
Don't know /not sure	4%	6%

The three way joint venture model with schools having an ownership role was the least supported option for the respondents to the school survey and the third most supported option for the residents survey respondents (net 36%, with another 21% saying they were willing to consider this model). Only 14% of school survey respondents placed this model as their most preferred. However, when first and second preferences were

counted it was slightly ahead of the two-way joint venture model, albeit that this is not a statistically significant finding.

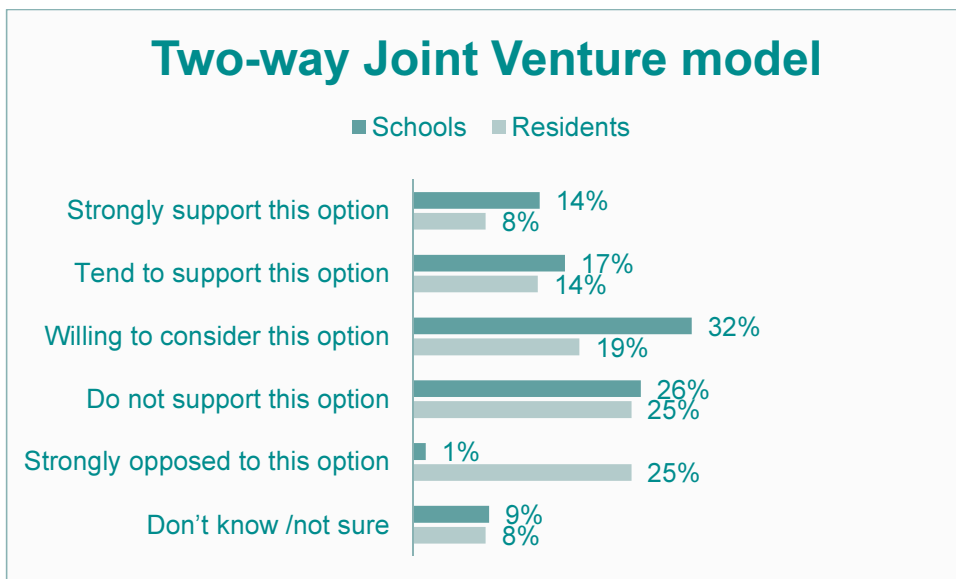Answers from the school survey had three positive comments about the model.

"This is our preferred option as it provides schools with a voice, but it also brings commercial expertise in. Our preference would be to see a not-for-profit organisation as the partner, but we realise that the final choice would be by competitive tender."

Negative comments were predominantly about having insufficient information to understand the implications of the model (6) and the importance of choosing the right partner (4).

"I don't feel I have sufficient information to fully understand the implications of this model. I understand that this may attract extra funds / investment - but I cannot see what the benefits would be for a third party other than taking money from the system. This is a completely new model, so no way of knowing what may happen.'

Reflecting on this model, the parents' focus group posed a number of questions relating to profits: would all parties benefit from the profits? What slice of profits would the company keep? How would the slicing of the cake be done? It was felt to be important under this model that the procurement process was very fair and transparent. It would also be important to avoid any conflict of interests, as without transparency people would not trust the organisation. The group felt the model would require a significant proportion of schools coming into the company so that the third party does not dominate.

Two-way joint venture with commissioning

Two-way Joint Venture model
■ Schools ■ Residents

Option	Schools	Residents
Strongly support this option	14%	8%
Tend to support this option	17%	14%
Willing to consider this option	32%	19%
Do not support this option	26%	25%
Strongly opposed to this option	1%	25%
Don't know /not sure	9%	8%

Whilst the two way joint venture model with commissioning received the greatest number of school survey respondents saying this was their preferred preference (32%), when the second place preference was taken into account it was marginally the least favoured model. It received the lowest number of schools respondents saying it was their least favoured model (15%). It received roughly the same number of school respondents saying they strongly/tend to support this model as the schools-led enterprise and in-house models. In contrast it was the least supported model for the resident survey respondents (19% net support).

Open comments from the schools survey showed 4 respondents recognised benefits from the model.

"This seems to be the most workable model, and the least risky one for schools."

The concerns raised in the open comments were primarily about the third party provider, with 5 comments highlighting concerns and another 3 suggesting they needed more information about the third party and their motivations.

"Hard to understand how commercial partnership can enhance provision and pass value-for-money test. Again, we are unclear how this would work in practice."

"After the Capita fiasco it is hard to trust the borough's decision making abilities. Will the company plough any profits back into the schools?"

On balance, the majority of participants in the parents' focus group found the joint venture with schools in a commissioning model to be the most attractive model. Compared with the other focus groups they were more comfortable with third party providers and could identify the benefits of having them involved, with the conditions that the right values and levels of transparency were in place. Questions were raised about how much profit the third party would get and it was felt to be a central question and key to being transparent. Some in the parents' focus group felt that if this was spelled out and was deemed to be reasonable then it would be acceptable for the company to generate some profit. Some liked the idea of this model because "it keeps schools here and businesses here and the council in the middle".

Services in scope

Introduction

The survey respondents and focus group participants were asked whether they agreed with each service being in scope for the new delivery model and if they had any comments about particular services.

Summary

The services in scope questions suggested a level of consensus between the surveys and focus groups. However, it is important to note that when reading the findings the schools' survey asks about services in a different way to the residents' survey when it comes to vulnerable pupils and welfare services, and around traded services.

With the exception of post-16 learning, the schools' survey showed a majority of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that the identified services should in scope for the planned changes. There were no comments to help understand why post-16 learning was less supported by the respondents. A majority of the school respondents strongly agreed with special educational needs (63%), school improvement (62%), vulnerable pupils (56%) and admissions (54%) being within scope for the new delivery model. There was a lower level of support for traded services (38% strongly agree and 83% net agree) and catering being in scope (27% strongly agree and 58% net agree).

The residents' survey responses showed a net agreement for all the services being in scope, with admissions (86% net agree), educational welfare (85%), educational psychology (88%), SEN (93%), schools improvement (90%) and post 16 learning (84%) having high levels of agreement. Only catering (42% strongly agree) and governor clerking (42% strongly agree) had minority levels of strong agreement with being in scope.

However, despite the high levels of agreement, there were concerns raised in both surveys around SEN, educational psychology and welfare services. The schools' survey contained 10 comments about the appropriateness of SEN and vulnerable pupils being dealt with outside of the local authority, since these are core services requiring knowledge and accountability. A further nine comments were made about the appropriateness of school admissions being passed to a delivery model which might have third party involvement or put admissions outside the control of the school.

There was a limited number of comments around each of the services in scope from the residents' survey.

Across all three focus groups, there were concerns about the SEN and welfare services being in a new delivery model. These concerns centred around how the quality of service delivery could be maintained if a 'business' person provided the service and about who would monitor the quality. In many of the discussions it appeared that participants tended to polarise their thoughts between the service staying in house and having a commercial third party involved in delivering the service.

Findings by service
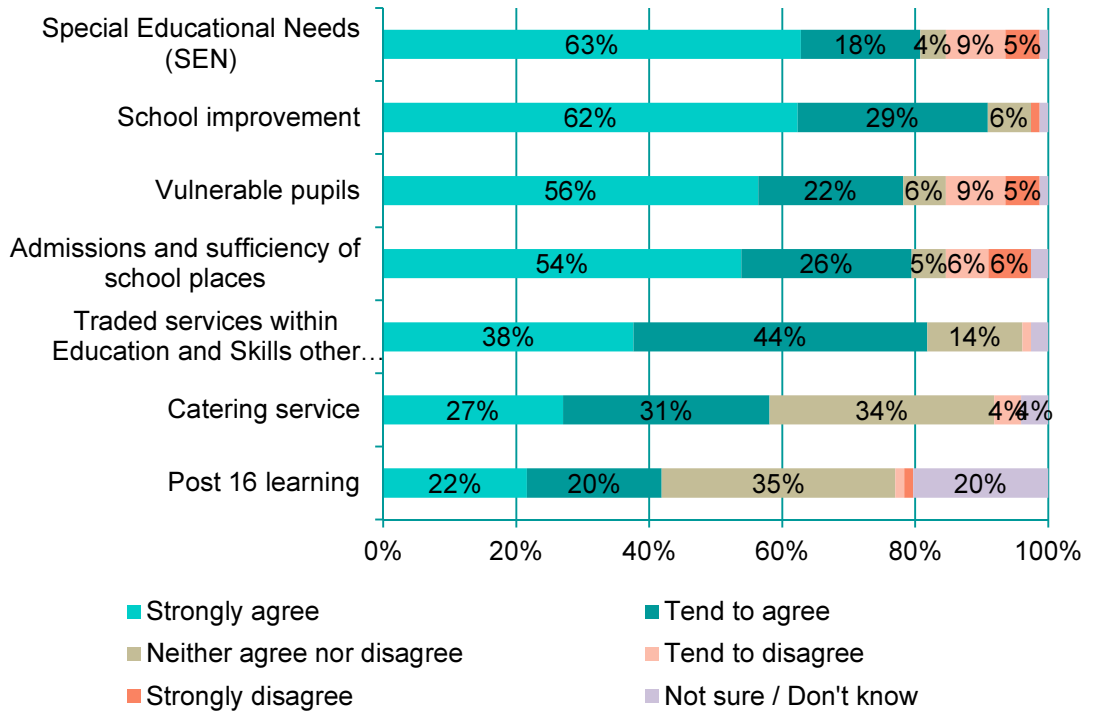
Schools' Survey: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these services should be included in the new delivery model?
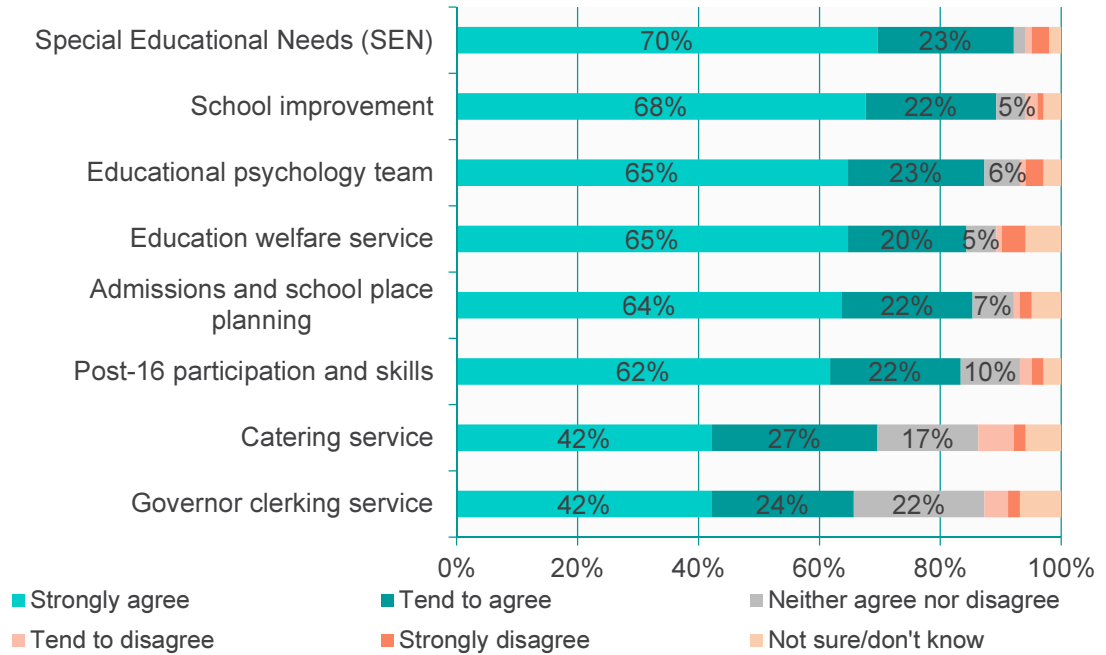
Residents' Survey: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these services should be included in the new delivery model?

SEN, Vulnerable pupils, Educational psychology and Educational welfare

Both surveys revealed support for these services being in scope. For SEN, 81% of school respondents and 93% of resident respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the service being in scope. 78% of school respondents strongly/agreed with vulnerable pupil services being in scope, while 88% and 85% of resident respondents respectively strongly/agreed with psychology and welfare services being in scope.

Whilst the surveys suggested the majority of people agreed with these services being in scope, they also attracted the highest numbers of concerns amongst respondents. Ten school respondents disagreed with the inclusion of Special Education Needs (SEN) and vulnerable pupils. Several respondents highlighted that SEN is a statutory provisions and should therefore remain within the remit of the council so as to maintain greater accountability for delivery. Similarly, others pointed out that services for SEN and vulnerable pupils concern Barnet's most vulnerable children and felt that this was incompatible with a third party delivery model. Others questioned how far a new delivery model would provide effective and efficient quality assurance in these areas.

Two residents' survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of Special Education Needs (SEN**)**, with one warning that vulnerable pupils may fall through the net and become lost. One also said that SEN services should include qualified assessors. Three resident survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of educational psychology teams**.** One said it should be a priority of the council to maintain and ensure the quality of these services, with another highlighting the effect of cutbacks.

Two resident survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of educational welfare, commenting that welfare services should be run by the council to maintain quality.

Some in the parents focus group felt that moving educational welfare out of the council and into a new organisation could expand the range of services on offer. However, others were more dubious about this. One person questioned whether the SEN services being delivered by a new model could result in speeding up the assessment and planning service. Another parent felt that bringing in another external body could complicate things further. Hence some parents believed that this service should stay with the council. Others were undecided

The parent governor focus group expressed general concerns about SEN services and welfare services being part of the new model. It was felt that regardless of the model these services needed to work as effectively as possible. Similarly, the SEN focus group was concerned that any delivery model would need to guarantee the monitoring and quality of service for education psychology and speech/language therapy.

Admissions

For Admissions, 80% schools respondents and 86% resident respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this service being in scope.

Nine school respondents disagreed with the inclusion of admissions and sufficiency of school places. Their comments reflected more general opposition to the involvement of a third party in the delivery of this service, along with others

One residents' survey respondent criticised the council's running of school admissions, saying that it should be easier to allocate places to preferred schools

Some of the parents' focus group felt admissions should stay with the council because it is so complex, contentious and competitive. The group agreed that the council are doing a good job of admissions: "don't' fix something that isn't broken" and "the council fixed the admissions system so leave it alone".

Catering

For catering, 58% of school respondents and 71% of resident respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the service being in scope

Four school respondents disagreed with the inclusion of catering services. Some questioned why catering has been included when it seems separate from the other services in scope. Indeed one person commented that this service should be separate from the model. An alternative suggestion was for catering to be provided through a social enterprise, with one respondent arguing that this would instil more confidence than a joint venture.

Three resident survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of catering services. They thought the catering service should remain under the control of the schools, with one respondent suggesting that there should be a bidding service with overall school

control whereby if the catering service was poor, the school would have the power to take appropriate action

The SEN focus group discussed whether the quality of school meals would be maintained and monitored if the service was delivered through a different service model. The key point being that the food would still have to be healthy and meet guidelines and that junk food could not be served. Neither of the other two focus groups raised any concerns about the catering being moved to a new model.

Post-16 learning

For post-16 learning, 42% schools respondents and 84% residents respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the service being in scope

Three school respondents disagreed with the inclusion of post-16 learning, although no comments were made directly in relation to this service.

The parents' focus group suggested that new models might be able to do more for children who are post -16; for example, apprenticeship and employment opportunities could be improved under models involving a third party provider. None of the other focus groups raised any concerns about post-16 learning being moved to a new model.

School improvement

For school improvement, 91% of school respondents and 90% of resident respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the service being in scope.

One school respondent disagreed with including school improvement. They felt that school improvement would be more effectively addressed through existing and new school partnerships.

Two resident survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of school improvement. One thought it was unnecessary spending whilst the other commented that the service has already been cut so significantly that it cannot deliver effectively to the needs of all schools.

None of the focus groups raised any concerns about school improvement being moved to a new delivery model.

Other traded services

62% of school survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with other traded services being in scope. 66% of resident survey respondents strongly/agreed with governor clerking services being in scope.

One schools respondent disagreed with including traded services within education and skills other than catering, arguing that "all traded services can be sought elsewhere and can be separated from the model."

Two resident survey respondents disagreed with the inclusion of governor clerking. One preferred the service to be done by individual schools, whereas the other thought the service should remain separate from schools.

None of the focus groups raised any concerns about clerking being moved to a new model.

Appendix 1: Barnet Education and Skills Process Plan

Time	Duration	Topic	Facilitator notes
6.30	5	**Introduction** Introduce OPM and the topic under discussion: This focus group is part of the consultation on the options for future delivery of the council's Education and Skills service - to help the council understand underlying principles and concerns, not to agree the final model. What we'll be discussing this evening: • Evaluation criteria • The models • The services This is one part of a consultation with schools, staff and stakeholders, the process started at the end of the last school year and will continue until end of November. Explain there is lots to get through in a short amount of time. There is also an online survey as well as these focus groups – Runs from 7 Oct 2014 to 1 Dec 2014 Ask everyone else to introduce themselves, age and school of child, and any education services they use Explain we will be recording the group so we can transcribe and analyse it.	Note details of age, school etc.

		Comments will be anonymous. Ask for permission to record. Introduce the usual ground rules (no talking over other people, respect opinions etc)	
6.35	5	**Introduction to the vision and the context** • Explain Barnet's vision for the future of education and the context within which changes to services will be taking place • Introduce the aims and the rationale - and check for initial thoughts • Answer any questions	See separate information sheet on myth busting
6.40	10	**Diagram of the process and all the stimulus cards** Lay out the cards in the order: 7 service cards to the left, 4 models in the middle, 8 evaluation criteria to the right. Hand out individual sheets with a copy of this diagram. • Explain how these services are being proposed to be delivered by one of the four models, which will be chosen based on the agreed evaluation criteria • Explain we will be working through each of the three aspects in turn over the course of the evening. • Open for questions and ensure people understand what is being proposed and why	See separate information sheet (big sheets + handouts) Try to maintain this as a question and answer session, explaining the detailed discussions will be had in the next sessions. However, allow spontaneous responses

6.50	25	**Discussion of the evaluation criteria** Place the A2 sheet on the table.. Work through each of the criteria cards in turn probing: • Are these the right criteria • Why • Any underlying concerns • Whether this is generally agreed or what the key differences in opinion are • Are there any criteria you think are missing (prompt for any service specific concerns)	Follow up on individual views to see if the group generally agrees/disagrees
7.20	25	**Discussion of the models** Provide the participants with the stimulus cards showing the 4 different models. Allow them a few minutes to read the descriptions, advantages and disadvantages for all 4 models. Ask if the participants understand what is meant by the different descriptions of the models and answer any questions. Task here is not to choose a model, council wants to understand concerns. • Which of the models they support most and least	Follow up on individual views to see if the group generally agrees/disagrees

		• Why that is • General levels of agreement • Underlying positives / concerns about specific delivery models (prompt for any service specific concerns)	
7.40	15	**Discussion of the services** Place the service description cards on the table. Ask the participants if they understand what each of the services covers • How do they feel about these services being delivered by the new delivery model in general • Do they have particular positives/concerns about any of the specific services and if so, why • Do they have any concerns about particular services being delivered by any of the specific delivery models • Are there any of the services which they think should be excluded from the scope and if so, why • Does it matter whether the service is provided by a third party org as long as the quality continues (as per question in the resident survey).	Follow up on all individual views to see if the group generally agrees/disagrees For the last bullet point - if people do have concerns about another party delivering services, it would be helpful to know why.
7.55	5	Thank you and evaluation forms	Incentives!

Appendix 1: Parents focus group recruitment quota

Parent	Ethnicity	Religion	Socio-economic group	Area of Barnet	Household make-up	Disability
All must be parents of children at school in Barnet **6 primary school** **6 secondary school**	Mix of ethnicities	3 Jewish (20% of population of Barnet is Jewish) Mix of other religions	3 AB 6 C1C2 3 DE	Mix of areas across Barnet	Mix of single parents and married/cohabiting	At least 2 participants to have self-declared disabilities