

## Democracy Commission

Tuesday 7 September 2010  
6.00 pm  
Southwark Town Hall

### Membership

Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)  
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai  
Councillor Columba Blango  
Councillor Mark Glover  
Councillor Michael Mitchell  
Councillor Helen Morrissey  
Councillor Cleo Soanes

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#### Contact

Julie Timbrell on 020 7525 7224 or email: [julie.timbrell@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:julie.timbrell@southwark.gov.uk)  
Webpage: [www.southwark.gov.uk/democracy](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/democracy)

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# Democracy Commission

Tuesday 7 September 2010  
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## Order of Business

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3.	<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 5 AUGUST 2010</b>	1 - 17
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The minutes of the meeting are attached along with papers tabled at the meeting

4.	<b>DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</b>	
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5.	<b>HEARING EVIDENCE</b>	
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Volunteer Centre Southwark – Clive Pankhurst, Chief Executive

6.	<b>REVIEWING EVIDENCE GATHERED SO FAR</b>	
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The commission will consider the following evidence:

1. Focus groups – held with residents, elected members and community leaders
2. Questionnaires
3. Oral testimonies and vox pops
4. Conference:  
Panel discussion, workshops and cafe conversations from the conference
5. Plain English paper on options for changing the decision making powers of Council Assembly
6. Minutes of meetings

Deborah Collins, monitoring officer, will be available to assist members with any legal and constitutional questions arising out of items 5 and 6.

Ian Mark , Senior Lawyer , will also attend .

**Item No.**

**Title**

**Page No.**

**7. SCOPING OUT THE REPORT**

Date: 31 August 2010



## DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Thursday 5 August 2010 at 6.00 pm  
at Southwark Town Hall

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)  
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai  
Councillor Columba Blango  
Councillor Michael Mitchell  
Councillor Helen Morrissey  
Councillor Cleo Soanes

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council and Labour group

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Stephen Douglass - Head of Community Engagement  
Julie Timbrell - Democracy Commission and Scrutiny Project Manager  
Sharon Beckwith - Community Engagement Officer  
Michael Cleere - Community Cohesion Coordinator  
Ian Mark - Senior Lawyer, Southwark Council

**RESIDENTS PRESENT:** Alma Gray  
Simon Kitchen  
Don Phillips  
Doreen Phillips  
Jerry Hewitt  
Liliana Dmitrovic  
Ari Henry  
Will Finch  
Stephanie Lodge  
Jim Lodge

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR
2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf Councillor Mark Glover.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST TWO MEETINGS (6 & 12 JULY 2010)

Minutes of the democracy commission meeting of 6 July and minutes of the democracy commission meeting of 12 July were agreed.

The Chair responded to questions from Ari Henry reiterating the overall aims of the democracy commission and those of the current task set for the democracy commission. Cllr Al-Samerai noted that not all members of the commission had been in absolute agreement that the initial focus on the Council Assembly was the best way to proceed.

### 4. EVIDENCE FROM THE LEADERS OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS

#### COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN, LEADER OF THE LABOUR GROUP

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Peter John presented his views on how the council assembly could be made more open and his aspirations for the democracy commission. He confirmed he would submit a written testimony following the meeting.

His view was that shifts in decision making power have perhaps left the council assembly with a possible lack of purpose. He reiterated its dual role of holding the cabinet to account and fully debating important matters of local relevance and said that it was at its most effective when there more deputations. He noted a consensus within the commission on some important points including possibility of changing location of some meetings. As well as looking at the venue, the Leader suggested changes might focus on times of meetings, web-broadcasting, greater public interactions through changes to the rules on deputations, considering changing the procedural rules so more spontaneous date can take place, members' questions, public questions, order of proceedings, adoption of themes, workshops, and other participatory meeting formats. The Carrib Football Club was discussed as an example of a deputation that had real impact. He suggested that themes for meetings could include a pre-budget debate and housing.

The following issues were raised:

- Possible difficulties in allowing public opinion to put pressure on a cabinet decision where a lot of work has already gone into preparation. (Cllr Mohamed)
- The political motivation of many deputations (Cllr Blango).
- How local should local politics be? (Cllr Blango)
- Need to consider how 'regular residents' will respond. They could be put of by the formality of a 'deputations' but may well be interested in coming along to a themed debate (Liliana Dmitrovic, People's Republic of Southwark).
- Most exciting thing about community councils is having the public really participating in decision making (Cllr Al Samerai).
- Cllr Al Samerai wanted to know if there were any plans to give any more decision powers to council assembly.

- Council assembly may not be the appropriate place for direct democracy. It will always be difficult to manage a debate of 'live' issues by 63 members. There is a danger that we might be squeezing out the role of councillors if more time is given to the public and less to councillor questions. We need to make sure all ideas that emerge as part of this democracy commission process are fed into other forums as relevant (Cllr Mitchell).
- One of the problems with deputations is the lack of reply (as experienced by Cooltan Arts). Our biggest problem with the council is with officers who do not send emails to community groups - not with councillors. Themed meetings would not be relevant for whole council events (Ari Henry).

Cllr John's responses:

Timing is crucial i.e. deputations need to happen prior to decisions being made and debates must be able to influence decisions. He conceded that national issues have too much coverage and was of the view that it is acceptable for deputations to be political with a small 'p' and in particular for the administration to be held to account through deputations. He noted that options other than making deputations to council assembly should still be available. He pointed out that the council assembly does not need more decision making power as it already has the ability to influence Cabinet decisions by the mere fact that all 63 council members have a say and agreed that there will always be a need for the Assembly to carry out formal duties, which can be quite dry.

### **COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI, LEADER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP**

Cllr Al-Samerai introduced and presented points from the paper submitted for this meeting, tabled and attached to the minutes.

Issues and comments:

- Cllr Cleo Soanes acknowledged that community councils were the ideal forum for engaging on local issues but that there is a real place for deputations at council assembly too. She said that local groups are not necessarily politically motivated but that come to assembly because of a passion about an issue.
- Cllr Helen Morrissey asked if there were themed meetings, e.g. on Housing, whether the Opposition would feel compelled to use this as an opportunity to gain political capital
- Gerry Hewitt expressed support for public questions and deputations at council assembly particularly when residents feel their views are not being represented through their ward councillors. He also pointed out that the Liberal Democrat suggestion of reducing the threshold for petitions to be heard at assembly meetings down to 100 was impractical as it would be too easy to get that number of signatures (although he agreed 3000 was too high).
- Cllr John noted that deputations to Cabinet could be very effective but that some groups were frustrated if they were unable to put their points to council assembly.
- Cllr Blango stated that deputations could be 'fantastic' if 'politics and mischief' were removed and a balance was struck so that members are not demotivated.

Responses:

In response to a question by Cllr Blango, Cllr Al-Samerai responded that local politics should be *very* local and bottom-up i.e. at community council level but that there needs to be mechanisms for different decision making bodies to feed into each other. She reiterated the importance of timing the debates and deputations carefully to have maximum impact. There is also a need to for effective communications of the opportunities available. Cllr Al-Samerai commented that the Opposition intended to be constructive. She noted that one potential problem with themed meetings was that they might not always include the most topical issues but that they would work well in terms of promoting meetings to the wider community and public. She suggested that the public could select themes and Cllr John agreed this was a possibility, and that other council bodies had set up task groups to plan the agenda.

The leader of the Conservative group; Councillor Lewis Robinson sent his apologies and is planning to do a written submission.

## 5. **COUNCIL ASSEMBLY DECISION MAKING POWERS - OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE**

The last meeting requested more information on what decision making powers could be transferred to the Council Assembly or delegated to other bodies such as Community Councils. Ian Mark, Senior Lawyer, Governance Team noted that it was very difficult to come up with a black and white list of powers that can be devolved because of a complicated set of rules determined by the Local Government Act 2000. He then presented the main points made in the paper he had submitted to the meeting and took questions.

Questions and comments:

- Cllr Mohamed asked if it would be possible to make space for initiatives like topical debates at meetings by giving more provision for late motions
- Cllr Blango suggested that the commission hold an in-depth meeting to consider such fundamental issues.
- Cllr Mitchell suggested delegating issues that would benefit from local knowledge to community council level such as road repairs. With regard to when decisions on changing the constitution of the council assembly are considered, he suggested a workshop at the democracy commission conference.
- Cllr Al-Samerai expressed concern at the idea of doing away with motions.
- Cllr Mohamed confirmed that the commission may need to get back to Ian once to advise them as and when they are developing their recommendations.
- Ari Henry objected to some of the language being used such as 'the public' instead of 'residents' or 'community' and repeated use of the word 'complex' implying that policy documents were inaccessible to residents. He also commented that community councils do not need to be at such as local level as they are now as the decisions they deal with are often of a wider nature and that if they were dealt with at council assembly level more groups would get involved from different areas which would limit instances of debates being

dominated by a single group or view.

- Jerry Hewitt expressed a lack of trust in politicians and in particular community councils to distribute funds fairly and stated that he would prefer council officers to make funding decisions.
- Cllr Morrissey asked that the new version of the paper on opportunities for change be written in Plain English.

#### Reponses

Ian Mark confirmed that there was no obligation for the public to be able to participate in council assembly meetings but that there is a strict process to follow in order to change current provisions of the constitution. He confirmed that the Cabinet can in effect delegate anything it wants to the Council Assembly except in some very specific cases.

#### **ACTION**

Ian Mark to review his paper and add more details including some sentences regarding delegation to community councils by council assembly, clarification on budgetary powers and potential implications of the recent localism bill. Efforts will be made to re-write in Plain English.

## **6. FEEDBACK ON FOCUS GROUPS AND QUESTIONNAIRES**

Ari Henry asked why the commission had chosen to use an external website to produce and host the online questionnaire and expressed concern at the possible misuse of respondents' email addresses and personal data by Survey Monkey. Julie Timbrell explained that Survey Monkey was the Council's communications department's recommended tool for producing online questionnaires. A response to the questions about survey monkey's privacy policy and reliability will be provided by Julie Timbrell.

To date there has been a focus group of residents who attend Council Assemble and a one elected members' focus group.

Another focus group for residents is being arranged.

A further focus group for elected members will be held on 10 August and in September.

Members of the commission stressed the need to collect more views through distribution of the questionnaire and holding of additional focus groups for members.

Residents, both those who are active and attend Community Councils or other meeting and others who have not been involved in council meetings are being targeted for their views. Residents and the community are being consulted through vox pops, by being invited to submit oral evidence and through focus groups.

Michael Cleere informed the meeting that officers had produced audio recordings of all of the focus groups, oral testimonies and vox pops and that he will be working on editing the recordings and transcribing the most relevant parts.

The online questionnaire will be distributed more widely through facebook and twitter



and sent out through various email networks.

Hard copies to be sent out to community council and other mailing lists , including all Tenants and residents association secretaries maintained by the Community Engagement Division & Resident Involvement as well as being distributed at other events. Julie Timbrell to look into the possibility of using Planning's mailing list, particularly their email list.

It was agreed that once Julie Timbrell obtained permission from participants to share audio-recordings on the internet, People's Republic of Southwark would be able to upload content onto their website.

## **7. PLANNING OUT THE CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY 4 SEPTEMBER**

The following venue options were considered: In-Spire, the Town Hall and Amigo Hall at St George's Cathedral. Amigo Hall was agreed.

A list of potential speakers was circulated and discussed. Officers were asked to contact Philip Whiteman of Birmingham University and Simon Schama, well-known historian' to find out if they were interested and available to be keynote speakers. It was also agreed that facilitators would be needed for workshops and possibly a panel discussion.

Councillors failed to agree on one of the proposed speakers /facilitators, a local activist, with labour political affiliations. Cllr Soanes hoped that political views would not exclude inspirational speakers. Other possibilities for keynote speakers that were discussed included the Chief Executive of Southwark and the Editor of the Southwark News.

The following points were flagged up:

Workshops would keep people more interested; too many presentations or long presentations were to be avoided; care needs to be taken if combining panel discussions and workshops; having celebrity speakers tends to skew results of consultation exercises as it attracts a specific group of people; workshops require extra time for the sharing of conclusions; facilitators need to be non-partisan.

Cllr Al-Samerai was keen for communications about the conference to be clear about the aims and focus of the day so as not to create false expectations. Cllr Mohamed reassured commission members that it will be made clear that the conference is focusing on making the council assembly more open and engaging but that would not preclude participants discussing wider democratic issues.

Findings of the democracy commission's consultation will be fed back to those taking part at the conference including results of questionnaires and extracts from focus groups.

## 8. YOUTH COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

Members' attention was drawn to the letter in the agenda pack from Southwark Youth Council inviting members to take part in their summer event. Julie Timbrell asked members to let her know if they were able to attend.

## 9. WORK PLAN

Cllr Mohamed confirmed that the commission would not attend *any* of the community council meetings as all agreed that it would be inappropriate to consult at some and not others. He explained that the date of the final report could not be changed. Cllr Al-Samerai expressed regret that the commission was not able to extend its timescale so that it could encompass all 8 community council meetings. Cllr Mohamed and Julie Timbrell assured members that all of the active citizens in each community council area would be appropriately informed and invited to get involved by the community engagement division that supports community councils.

It was agreed that commission members would continue to plan the finer details of future events and the report by way of an email discussion group.

The next formal meeting of the democracy commission was confirmed for 7 September. The final meeting will be on 23 September. Helen Morrissey gave her apologies for meeting of 23 September.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**

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## **Liberal Democrat thoughts on council assembly**

### **Decision Making**

As the Democracy Commission has already noted, the last government ensured that decision making was moved towards the Executive and the Leader. This makes it particularly difficult to engage the public as they are not actually taking part in real decisions. This is something which we now have an excellent opportunity to address. The new government's Localism Bill plans to free up local authorities from centrally controlled rules and Southwark should be contributing ideas about how decisions and powers can be moved back to local elected representatives and local people. We could already start by ensuring that important Cabinet decisions are debated at full council. We should be making representations to DCLG about the decisions which should be taken by all 63 councillors rather than just the Cabinet.

### **Petitions and deputations**

Although the last government created prescriptive rules about where and when a petition could be heard we could still look at some elements such as the number of signatures needed for an issue to be debated. 500 seems much more sensible than the current rules of 3000 and some Liberal Democrat councils have already opted to reduce the number in this way. We could have a threshold of 500 for a borough wide issue and 100 for a ward issue.

Petitioners could also be allowed to present instead of councillors.

Allow deputations to ask questions of the Leader/Cabinet members as well as questions being asked of them.

### **Questions and Motions**

More time could be allowed for members' questions (1 hour instead of 30 minutes) with the possibility for 2 supplemental questions. Or we could have half an hour of public questions from the gallery.

Allow more urgent questions to the Leader from cllrs so that more topical issues can be discussed.

Publicise public question time more widely (maybe push via CCs) and actively invite community groups/TRAs/residents to come and ask questions. Particularly residents who aren't getting satisfaction through other council channels.

Limit petitions and motions to issues over which the council has control rather than just debating national or international issues.

Place statutory reports and constitutional items at end of meetings to make sure the early part of the meeting is focused on the parts which the public find most interesting.

### **Information and access for the public**

One of the great benefits of community councils is that the public are actually part of the meeting and can take part in an active way - through workshops, by voting, by allocating funding, by asking questions and by making their own presentations. This means genuine participation and engagement and we need to look at how to apply these methods to council assembly. Participatory budgeting would be really exciting for the public if possible.

Holding council assembly in different locations across the borough and publicising it would help to ensure greater public attendance.

The paperwork available in the gallery should be more helpful. Basically its a random number of whatever agenda, minutes, questions etc just left on table which are very hard to follow. Perhaps a simple leaflet explaining procedure, format and order would be good. A listing of councillors by name, party and responsibility would help. It would also be good if a member of constitutional staff could be in the gallery as people arrive to explain the paperwork and the process.

Council language and papers should be in plain English as far as possible.

Tickets for gallery are given out at 7pm meaning it is a rush and people miss the beginning of the meeting - they should be given out 10 mins before.

### **Tying in with existing public engagement**

Have a joint meeting with Southwark Youth Council and let them have a role in agenda setting.

Allow community councils to feed in to full council more formally. For example if there is an issue to be debated at full council, ensure views from community councils are included by having items on CC agenda before and after full council.

### **Other issues**

Concerns has been raised that council assembly is the first item for the Democracy Commission to look at and that the approach of the commission appears to be top down.

August is also the worst time to be doing any form of consultation as councillors and members of the public are often away.

We would also like to discuss an STV voting system for councillors at some stage of the commission's work.

**POST ASSEMBLY FOCUS GROUP****Southwark Town Hall****14 JULY 2010****Edited transcript of comments****(SI)**

Too long.

I came a bit late and couldn't follow what was going on. It took me a long time to catch up.

If something was going to be discussed affecting life on my street I would have come just for that part.

**(EN)**

I liked hearing the debate and the arguments from both sides. I really liked getting that rich perspective rather than just reading about it in Southwark News.

**(TH)**

I thought it was just a replication of national party politics, with people just taking their party position rather than focusing on the issues that might affect people. You felt the votes were almost pre-ordained, just because of which party was in power.

I was shocked to hear that people had been moved out of the Heygate Estate for three years and nothing had happened, and that the impact on people had been so dramatic and traumatic. And that it was all stuck in a kind of political process.

**(OK)**

I thought it was nice to see what was happening behind the scenes. The real life effect was quite good. But we were just there to watch and couldn't get involved, to voice our own opinions. And I think it would have been nice to see the whole speakers. When someone is talking to me I like to see their body language, because body language speaks a lot.

**(T)**

I think the whole thing was just politics. They were just talking at each other. I didn't see any debate there. Everybody wanted to say how good they were.

And wanted to ridicule the other instead of being constructive and thinking about the people, not their jobs. Instead of recognizing their mistakes and learning from their mistakes.

They were just thinking about spinning and this is what I saw really. I really didn't see dialogue.

And even if there was a problem and I wanted to participate, I couldn't. So there was no democracy. There was no outlet for the population.

### **(AC)**

What increased my enjoyment was that there was one motion where they all voted together – for this democracy investigation to go ahead. And I was really glad to be part of it.

And I thought they should really work very hard for some consensus before coming before the public. Not just perform their pre-ordained roles as members of parties.

Local politics is not the same as the house. It's just duplicating, replicating what goes on in the house.

### **EN**

But I wonder how much of that is really following the party line, because outside that room, in their own communities, they will engender change because they are genuinely passionate about their communities.

There is a little bit of a performance going on. Behind the scenes they will work together.

### **AC**

But that performance would have been better if everybody coming in was at least given a motion paper. Some people had stacks of papers and some of us had no papers at all. Even a list of motions. We didn't know what they were talking about half the time.

### **(M)**

There were also assumptions that we would know what was going to be talked about. And how things are organized. Very simple basic stuff. And for me the language was a bit of a barrier.

### **TH**

On the papers, I did look on the website and they were available. But for environmental reasons I didn't want to print 70 pages.

**M**

What was good was that there were so many people there (in the gallery) and I hope they had a look and saw that.

**(JB)**

But then they kicked us out when it really mattered.

**TH**

But that was one of the most entertaining bits because I thought, “they’ve messed up here”.

**OK**

I thought it was quite shocking. They spoke quite passionately and yet they were still willing to cover up a few confidential things, because we were there. I couldn’t understand what that was all about.

**(OV)**

It was confidential. That’s why it wasn’t explained.

**EN**

It would have been good to introduce that at the beginning and say that if anything confidential comes up this is what would constitute a breach.

**AC**

I think the website needs to be more user-friendly. Have more pictures on it and simple language. To find out what the agenda was for this meeting you had to trawl through loads of stuff.

**SI**

I think the difference between this and the community council meeting is that there you can speak but here you can’t. There you can ask for something to be on the agenda or for a planning official or someone like that to come and speak. And there’s not so much time wasted debating what the political leaders’ want.

**EN**

The other thing that was missing for me was the voluntary sector. They’re completely not on the agenda. And small businesses. I wondered why the

heck they weren't there. Especially when they were debating the emergency budget.

**AC**

The public gallery is not helpful to co-operation between the council and the public. The way that it's set up, with the pillars that you can't see round. You can't see the people who are talking. And then the height too. I think the whole thing should be turned around and the public should be put where the Mayor is and the Mayor can be in the gallery. The people who want to participate should all be together on the floor. And all those huge chairs and stuff, which is taking up an awful lot of space, should be removed. What's the point of it? The point seems to be to have the Mayor raised up above everybody else but he actually participates less than most people. Therefore he doesn't need all that space.

**M**

I think it's important to make clear what the purpose of the assembly is. Because if it's about informing people and you can't speak, then that would be alright if I'm told that beforehand.

**TH**

There's something that's happened in Estonia where they've really made a big effort to put government online. So if there's going to be a debate about the Heygate Estate there should be emails to people living there to let them know that the assembly is going to be talking about that. Then they can go online and the increased transparency kind of reduces corruption and increases local participation.

It's not difficult to make a web broadcast. And if things are automatically available people don't have to come all the way here. They can just go online and have a look.

**JB**

But you also have to make sure that everyone has a computer and can do that.

**TH**

That's what they did in Estonia. They made sure everyone had the right to broadband access. It's better to have someone watching online than nobody knows about it at all.

**EN**

I wonder if surgeries could also be made a bit more interesting. More of a two way information exchange, where you're not only bringing your personal



problems but also your local community issues. And I think it would also encourage more people to take part if they knew that outcomes are going to be acted upon, so that you're not just going there to get information like an information junkie. You also know that they're going to feed back to you at a further meeting. More interactive and inclusive.

**SI**

The (assembly) meetings start too early and they go on too long. They should also think about having them at weekends.

**T**

They should also listen to each other. For example, when the [Liberal Democrat Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny] replied to something the [Labour Cabinet member for Regeneration] had said, the other one just left. You don't leave at that moment when the other one is answering to your question.

**JB**

To me it was like they were just reading from a script.

**AC**

They (assembly meetings) should also be on Facebook. And online debates.

**OK**

I think they were more interested in winning points over each other rather than touching base on the issue and how it should be tackled. It was all manifestos, things they were willing to do, but they didn't really say how they were going to tackle it. All they kept saying was "regeneration" but I didn't know what they were going to regenerate.

I found those little screens helpful but I only saw them after a while. The ones with their names and counting down three minutes.

**AC**

It might also be good to have two parts to the meeting. One formal part and then you break into groups according to what you're interested in. To express your opinion on the spot because there's so much paper coming through your door.

**EN**

I love Southwark and there's always so much going on. So many forums, groups, community councils. All doing wonderful work. Lots of information going through them. But they're often separate entities and they don't all

interrelate into one big nerve centre. So there's something for me about this process not being just another one.

For me it has to be about galvanising people to be participants in the community in which they live and to be stakeholders, and to challenge, and debate. I can see so much potential for community dialogue.

## **TH**

If you could have theme-based meetings. For example, on schools, housing, environmental issues. I think that would engage people more, rather than a hodge podge of a meeting that covers a little bit of everything.

## **EN**

I'm really into glamorous events where people tell decision-makers how it really is and Southwark doesn't really have that. And it doesn't really cost a lot of money. It's just a case of organization and doing it. Have a panel made up of top ministers and politicians. Or something even more creative than that. Something where the public can really go and not sit on that layered thing, but everyone is equalized on one level. Do something quite glamorous in Southwark and put it on the map!

## **T**

Have a party. Social gatherings are great for engaging with people. You don't need to spend a lot of money. Just throw a party where people are happy! You can talk about politics at a party, where people are informal. It's much better than being up there (in the gallery) and hidden.

## **OK**

I've been wondering about this whole thing and what you could call it. And I thought of "meeting point".

## Potential speakers at 4 September event

### Academics and consultants

**Dr Philip Whiteman:** Lecturer, INLOGOV Director of Learning and Teaching, Institute of Local Government Studies, Birmingham University. He is currently doing some research on full council and in particular on the potential impact of changes in government policy. This summer 2010 he is carrying out desk research on historical context of full council pre-1997 and plans to call an Inlogov conference on the subject in Autumn/Winter 2010. He believes full council is an underutilised body and that it could – potentially – be opened up to public participation and become a ‘civic arena for public inclusion’.

**Professor Howard Davis:** Acting Director, Local Government Centre (LGC), Warwick Business School. He was approached in relation to work he did some time ago on Birmingham’s democracy commission. Although he does not have specialised knowledge of issues related to full council, he saw potential for linkages with his recent work (Overview and Scrutiny functions, leadership, localised management, partnership/joint working the work of the executive). He sees Council Assembly as being somewhat neglected in current academic research which means this would be an opportune time to revisit its role. He is familiar with Southwark in particular through his experience surveying Southwark as part of national evaluation of strategic partnerships and had a number of ideas on how you might go about making an assembly more engaging. His recommended approach would be to go back to basics by asking ‘what do we have and what can we do?’ and to build on the council’s own good practice in other areas. He suggested that John Stewart as an expert in the field (see below).

**Emeritus Professor John Stewart:** A retired professor of Local Government and Administration formerly at Inlogov at Birmingham. Has carried out research around enlivening Council Assembly meetings *circa* 2004. He is still semi-active and can be contacted directly or through Howard Davis.

**Professor Steve Leach:** Professor at de Montfort University. His main interests are political leadership, local politics, strategic planning and management and local government structures and reorganisations. He has worked extensively with councillors and the Scrutiny team at Southwark.

**Simon Baddeley:** Visiting Lecturer at Birmingham University and Associate of the Institute of Local Government Studies. He is very familiar with Southwark through past and ongoing consultancy and training. He is known for being adept at connecting with his audience and getting them to engage with the subject of local government. His main interest is the working relationship between politicians and managers - members and officers. Current and recent projects include co-organising Inlogov’s accredited Post-Graduate Module on Oversight and Scrutiny and leading training and development events for local councils across the UK (including Southwark) on Overview and Scrutiny skills and on ‘managing with political awareness’ and ‘political sensitivity for members and officers’.

**Ginny Lee:** Research Coordinator at the Young Foundation. She is interested in the ways in which government can be more responsive to the needs of its citizens. Current projects include ‘First Political Memory’ which is an online memory bank which aims to reconnect people’s everyday lives with politics and the UpRising leadership programme (aiming to support and train a new generation of public leaders). NB: if Ginny Lee is not available then one of her colleagues could be approached. Experience amongst officers of working with the Young Foundation has been positive.

## Other potential speakers

**Rowenna Davis:** an SE1 resident who has won a grant for a project to create a website that will encourage more young people to get involved in local politics. She is 25-year old is a freelance journalist who writes about social affairs and politics for publications such *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*. She is also secretary of the Cathedrals and Chaucer Branch Labour Party and stood as a Labour Party candidate in Cathedrals ward in 2010.

**Charlie Cherrill** – Ex Southwark Member and Mayor. He is currently Chair of the Pensioners Parliaments & Forum.

**Simon Schama**, CBE is a British historian and art historian. He is a professor at Columbia University. He is best known for writing and hosting the 15-part BBC documentary series *A History of Britain*.

