

Climate Change Citizens Jury – Background Information

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For: Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

20th February 2023

Introduction

1. The Commission has asked for details about how the council undertook a citizens jury as part its engagement work on the climate emergency. The Commission has specifically asked officers about the process of the jury as an engagement technique, rather than the subject matter of climate change.
2. This paper provides background for the commission on how the jury was set up and some of the key elements from the process.

Background to the Climate Change Citizens Jury

3. In March 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and committed to doing all it could to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030. It published a climate change strategy and action plan in draft in July 2020. In addition to comprehensive engagement around the publication of the strategy, the council also established a citizens' jury to build on this engagement. The jury was a further way of ensuring that at all times we were aligning with our residents and making the journey to a carbon neutral future alongside our residents.
4. A citizens' jury is a type of deliberative forum. A representative group of residents are brought together around a particular policy issue. They are presented with evidence from expert speakers and given the time and support to evaluate the evidence, form opinions and provide a series of recommendations. Juries typically (although not always) consist of around 25 members of the public and is a smaller version of a citizens' assembly.
5. The process centres on answering a specific question, in order to focus the jury and ensure the recommendations are directly related to the topic being discussed. The central question for the Southwark Climate Change Citizens' Jury to respond to was: 'What needs to change in Southwark to tackle the emergency of climate change fairly and effectively for people and nature?'
6. The council wanted to ensure that its engagement had breadth and depth. The engagement and consultation ahead of publication of the strategy and action plan ensured that we had breadth – speaking to a wide range of people to understand their views. The jury process complemented this by working with a smaller group of residents who were representative of the borough as a whole, but who had time to consider the issues in depth before responding.

7. The council commissioned Shared Future, a social enterprise and community interest company with extensive experience of delivering citizens' juries and assemblies, to manage the process. This brought knowledge and experience to the process while also ensuring the process was delivered with a degree of independence from the council so that jury members were able to tackle this issue in the way that they thought is best.
8. The full report of the jury is available here: [Southwark Citizens Jury Report](#).

Recruitment of the Jury

9. One of the defining features of a Citizens' Jury is the way that participants are selected. The jury gains much of its legitimacy through random selection. The Sortition Foundation (a not-for-profit organisation that are experts in the use of stratified, random selection in decision-making) randomly selected addresses within Southwark from the Royal Mail address database. Each address received a small pack with information and inviting people to join.
10. We made clear that participants did not need any specialist skills, knowledge or equipment to take part and that they would receive £330 in vouchers as an incentive to ensure wider participation. The council considered that a financial incentive as part of the process was important as this helped ensure that money was not a barrier to participation and that those residents who were not normally engaged were still heard.
11. Of those who applied to join, a process of stratified sampling was used to select thirty invitees. Participants were selected by the Sortition Foundation so that the final profile of the jury reflected local diversity in terms of: age, disability, ethnicity, gender, geography, relative deprivation of an area and attitude to climate change. Our jury largely reflected the profile of Southwark as a whole.

Oversight Panel

12. To help ensure independence, the jury process had an oversight panel. This was an effective way of making sure that there was independent, transparent scrutiny, leading to integrity and trust amongst decision makers and the wider public. The panel brought together a wide range of local stakeholders with a range of expertise to ensure that the jury process was robust and fair.
13. Their panel's role was to agree upon and monitor the structure of the jury; set the question which the jury would seek to answer, agree the process of citizen recruitment; identify suitable commentators to present to the jury and to push for implementation of the recommendations.

14. The oversight panel included member representation from both the cabinet and shadow cabinet, and officer representation, as well as representatives from the community sector, faith communities, campaign organisations, tenants associations, developers, BIDs, academics, businesses and youth representatives.

Structure of the Jury

15. The jury took place for approximately thirty hours online with two in-person sessions were designed to bring people together for full days at key points in the process. If it were not for the pandemic, we would have held all sessions in person.
16. Jury members were supported by independent facilitators. Participants were given the opportunity to share their opinions and hear those of other jury members, as well as hearing from and questioning seventeen commentators or outside experts.
17. Participants were able to shape the process by identifying three key themes which would form the focus for three of the sessions. In the final sessions, jury members were supported to write a set of recommendations answering the question: 'What needs to change in Southwark to tackle the emergency of climate change fairly and effectively for people and nature?'
18. Participants voted on the final recommendations.

Commentators

19. A central feature of the jury and other deliberative processes is the 'commentator' or 'expert witness'. Their role is to offer participants a particular perspective or perspectives on the issue before being questioned by the jury members. The selection of the commentators was decided by members of the oversight panel in conjunction with Shared Future.
20. As well as commentators, the council also ensured that council officers were on hand during the question and answer sessions in case jury members requested any background information from a council perspective.
21. Each commentator made a presentation to the jury. They were encouraged to be as engaging as possible and to use non-technical language. The jury would then break up, talk about their learning and come back with questions. This gave the jurors an opportunity to learn, discuss and question the experts. There were various mechanisms in place for jury members to ask questions and explanations to help their understanding.

General

22. The climate change team found the citizens' jury a very worthwhile process. It strengthened the council's climate response, and ensured that our work is better aligned with the views of residents. The process was resource intensive and required an outside organisations to do a lot of work before and during the process to speak to the jurors, to work through any technical problems, to keep them engaged in the process, and to make it as accessible as possible.
23. Through the process, the jury was in the driving seat. The role of the facilitators was to support the jury, but the topics that the jury want to focus on and the decisions they made were their own. The oversight panel set the question for the jury, and was there to help the jury primarily by finding commentators who could address the issues that the jurors were most interested in. The oversight panel also tried to find commentators that would give a range of views and opinions.
24. The early sessions gave the jury a general overview of the issues and the topic of climate change. The sessions were facilitated to allow jurors to agree guidelines for working together. After initial sessions, they then prioritised the themes they wanted to focus on, and had sessions with experts in these themes. After this the jury spent time considering what they had learned, and developing a set of recommendations which they voted on to rank in preference.
25. The jury submitted their final report and recommendations to the council for the council to respond.
26. The council welcomed the jury's recommendations. A full cabinet response was agreed in July 2022 and most of the recommendations from the jury were incorporated into the council's climate change strategy and action plan.
27. The jury, having delivered their recommendations, was formally ended. However, we now have a group of very engaged residents who have a lot of knowledge about climate change. There is an opportunity for the council to work with jurors independently in the future on these issues and some jurors have asked to stay involved.