

Southwark Democracy Commission.

Saturday 4 September 2010

Influential Active Citizens Workshop 3.

Influential Active Citizens-How do we enable people to get involved in debates and decisions and in turn enable the council to be influenced and respond appropriately?

Facilitated by Aisha Bryant. Active Citizens Hub. Note taker. Grace Semakula

How can we influence the Council?

There was a discussion about other mechanisms and how peoples could get their voice heard and listened too in the public arena... Some people felt that this idea could start with the community councils. However, people mentioned that maybe in the future that their could be an elected chair of the community council. Local people also raised a point that they would like to form a committee, set up to shape and plan the agenda for their community council meeting.

What is the mechanism? Practical suggestions

The meeting said that they would benefit from officers giving them a list of topics and suggestions for discussion at the committee meeting. However, it would be up to the people to decide which item they would like to have on the community council agenda. Noted. It was important to note that people from the group said that there were a number of other community mechanisms in place for community involvement and participation, ie t&ra's Communities of interest, faith, sport etc

How can people communicate?

There were a number of suggestions from the workshop about how people communicate information. These were by email, local noticeboards, sports centres, Tesco, Libraries etc. There was also a concern that people felt that they didn't understand the role of the community councils. Those present said that they would like to have education and training about community councils. They also expressed a need to have a pre-meet before and after with the community council officer.

How can we influence?

Recommendations:

A lively discussion took place around how the community could influence the council.

- Do we need to replace the community councils with another layer?
- We all need to be made aware of the Sustainable Communities Act
- To have the expertise of a lawyer to explain all the laws i.e. Southwark Forward Plan, White Paper, Section 106, etc
- To have the opportunity to shadow council officers
- The Council must go to the people, not the other way round

- Some community council meetings have good leadership. It is important to have a good uniform of leadership across the board

Practical recommendations:

- Interface between the Council and the People
- Should be involved in Agenda planning
- There should be facilitations in place at meetings, whose role it is to speak up on behalf of the community.
- Regular Training to be provided, for confidence building, speaking out, council structures, public speaking etc

How can we influence the Elected Officers?

- By networking and communication
- The conference needs to dialogue more with local people
- Ongoing feedback
- Facilitators in place at each community council meeting
- Can the Council go back to the Committee System?
- Accountability is important, with a mid-term appraisal
- Young people need to be informed of the Council structures

Grace Semakula.
14 September 2010

