

Surry Gardens Tenants and Residents Association

Consultation on Council Assembly

7 September 2010

Essentially, the feeling was that the structures are in place already - the effort needs to be on improving the current system rather than adding to it. There were a number of concrete examples given and these included a lack of a feedback loop leading to lack of communication/insufficient notice given re a committee meeting to discuss a planning application. For example the TRA reported that they emailed an objection to a planning application but complained there was no mechanism in place to give respondents notice of the planning meeting to discuss the item, so by the time they were aware of this they had missed the timescale to formally submit comments. They also gave example of very late notice to meet officers and a general lack of response to emails or requests to be notified of committee or community council meetings. The TRA emphasised that if these issues were fixed it would mean that the systems in place would probably work really rather well as they stand.

This is a summary of the points they made about democracy in general and the Council Assembly in particular:

- There could be more publicity of, and education about Council Assembly meetings
- Is there a clear objective of the consultation, and opening up the Council Assembly? What do you really want to achieve - is it participation; or do you wish to devolve decision making?
- Attendance at the Assembly is probably better than at the (TRA) Forum
- What is the regularity and purpose - it isn't clear enough
- With limited resources, and Council budgets to be cut even further, perhaps maintaining facilities would be preferred, to informing and consulting with everyone
- Democracy as it presently works is good
- Keep the TRA informed - include them on a circulation list about when Community Council meetings will be happening: there were 4 days with only 2 working days to return papers concerning 133 Lorimore Road. This pays lip service to engagement
- Officer links between the TRA and the Council must be improved; there should be more contact
- This Democracy Commission consultation is a very rare example of communication working properly
- To put any more "layers" in, other "layers" should be taken out - any other channels to the Council should be different and clear
- A Community Council meeting could be converted to an Assembly meeting, if there is a decision taken to move around to different locations
- Be pro-active in giving information (e.g. notice of the planning application !!!!) for example, a webpage / information with details and contacts for all the TRAs