Your local assembly, your say!

LOCAL ASSEMBLY
ANNUAL REPORT

2012
Introduction

This report has been put together to show where assemblies are at in 2012 and what has been achieved in the last year. The programme continues to provide people with an opportunity to:

• Come together with Councillors, residents, local organisations and the Council to solve issues affecting their local area

• Influence decisions and have a say on issues that are important to them

• Work with others to start up new projects, community groups and deliver change for themselves

Only a fraction of the many successes of the programme are included in this report, but it offers a taster of the innovative engagement techniques used to ensure as many people as possible have a voice; an insight into how assemblies provide a platform for grassroots community development to thrive; and examples of how assemblies are delivering their action plans.

One of the great things about Local Assemblies is that each one has evolved differently, bringing people together in a variety of ways to get things done. An initial aim of the programme was to recognise that different areas have different challenges and opportunities and therefore need flexibility in the way they work. As shown in this report, the range of tools used to engage people and the variety of issues being worked on shows this approach has been fruitful.

Looking ahead to the next year there are many reasons to be optimistic. Successful partnership working between residents, the Council and the voluntary sector shows that by working together we can make less money go further. The assembly coordinating groups, local residents and others are taking on more responsibility for delivering change in their area; supported and guided by their local assembly. New legislation, such as the Localism Act, will bring new opportunities, challenges and approaches to neighbourhood working for assemblies. And the programme will continue to adapt and develop to ensure that as many people as possible are able to contribute to and participate in improving where they live.
FOCUS ON community led action

Local assemblies are empowering and enabling bodies, who provide the infrastructure, space and in some cases the resources needed for communities to come together to develop an idea and deliver it themselves. We often see a spark of an idea at an assembly grow into something much bigger as people meet like-minded people and work together to solve their common problems. Examples of how assemblies have been used as a platform for community-led action are set out below.

Northbrook Park in Grove Park ward suffered from anti-social behaviour which put parents and other residents off using it, which in turn led to further anti-social behaviour. A young resident, Ryan Wells, and his mother, Michelle, wanted to improve the park and approached the assembly to garner support. They set up a local group, with support from the assembly; and were awarded an initial £10,000 from the assembly which set the ball rolling. They went on to attract further funding totally £200,000 from various sources including the People’s Millions Lottery; and have transformed the park.

Community action occurs on a smaller scale too. In Perry Vale a small group of residents were concerned about anti-social behaviour and crime in their street and the adjoining alleyway. They approached the assembly to raise the issue, and were supported to get the rest of their street involved and purchase a security mirror. This small improvement has made a significant difference to the safety of those residents and has brought the residents together, many of whom now regularly attend the assembly meetings.

In Whitefoot the assembly local residents and pupils from Conisborough College came together, through the assembly, to organise a Big Tidy Up to improve their area. Supported by the Council’s environmental services in 2011 they cleaned Castillon Road and the alleyway at the back of Goldsmith’s Community Centre.; and in 2012 they cleaned up Beachborough Gardens.

In Lee Green ward the assembly provided the platform for community-action at a grassroots level to improve the local shopping centre. The Leegate Centre is a run down shopping centre once described by the Evening Standard as the worst in the UK, with no improvements made in many years meaning it has become an eye sore in the local area. This was identified as a priority for the assembly from day one; and since then local people have come together to deliberate how the area could be improved in the short-term, and how they could influence redevelopment in the long-term. The new group, Lee Green Lives, was set-up from the assembly; and have been instrumental in liaising with the developers about resident concerns on the proposals to re-develop the area.
Local Assemblies in numbers...

- **Average Attendance**: 73
- **People Who Said They’d Attend Another Meeting**: 99%
- **People Who Had Their Expectations Met**: 73%
- **New People at Each Meeting**: 36%
- **Young People Involved Outside of Meetings**: 2,964
- **People Who Said They Learnt More About Local Issues**: 90%
- **People Who Said They’d Attend Another Meeting**: 99%
- **Highest Meeting Attendance**: 450
- **Total Numbers Participating**: 12,671
- **People Who Felt They Could Influence Decisions**: 65%
- **Website Hits**: 3177
- **Number of Disabled People Attending Meetings**: 12%
- **Number of Projects Funded**: 202
- **Number of People Attending Meetings**: 36%
- **Number of BME People Attending Meetings**: 1%
- **Mayor & Cabinet Report**: 1

Numbers refer to the 2011/12 financial year.
Influencing decisions

The local assemblies have continued to enable local people to influence how services are designed and delivered. For example, during 2011-12 assemblies supported consultation on the crime survey, planning local infrastructure needs, housing allocations, location of a new drug centre and Community Education Lewisham course planning. At a ward level assemblies have influenced change as well; as the following examples show.

In Evelyn and New Cross the assemblies have been working closely with the planning department to ensure that local people are kept informed and involved around development happening in their neighbourhood, such as the Surrey Canal and Convoys Wharf regeneration schemes. Following concerns raised by local residents about the new developments not being of benefit to local people, the New Cross Assembly negotiated with planning to ensure funding and commitment from the developer for local labour with a target of 50% of jobs for local people, including people in the ward. A commitment was also made for sports facilities to be available for local people 20% of the time.

In Lee Green one of the top issues in the area was concerns around parking and the controlled parking zones (CPZs). About 90% of the ward has a CPZ and residents initially supported them due to parking pressure caused by commuters – but the costs of permits was increased which led to a lessening of support for the scheme. Following a number of discussions at assembly meetings, and subsequent smaller ‘working groups’ the assembly developed a report that looked at the current situation in the ward and proposed a number of recommendations to improve this. This report was presented to Mayor & Cabinet and as a result, borough wide parking and CPZ arrangements are being reviewed and the Lee Green report is feeding directly into this.

In Telegraph Hill local residents had raised concerns about the Kender Triangle Traffic Scheme being implemented by Transport for London (TfL). TfL attended the Assembly meeting in January 2012 to listen to residents concerns about the scheme. Whilst some of the fundamental elements of the scheme could not be changed at that stage, a number of smaller improvements were made directly as a result of concerns raised at the meeting, allowing motorbikes in the bus lanes, levelling an uneven and puddle-prone stretch of road and TfL agreeing to improve their consultation processes in future.
**GETTING INVOLVED pyramid of participation**

In 2011/12 we successfully enabled more people than ever to get involved with their Local Assembly. For the first time, participation outside the more formal Assembly meetings was larger than at the meetings. This helped ensure people from a wider range of backgrounds got the opportunity to be involved and shape the future of their area. Examples of how this is done can be found in the next few pages.

Over the next year, we want to help more people get involved and to enable those already involved to make an even bigger difference. For example, some wards are trialing coffee mornings to engage with people who do not like or feel comfortable with formal meetings.

In addition, Assembly road shows are being expanded to provide more flexible and innovative ways of taking part. Working closely with the time credits project that is being developed, the Local Assembly team has a great tool to increase volunteering in the area whilst delivering projects that residents have told us they want to see in their area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You said you wanted Rushey Green’s rich history to be celebrated;</th>
<th>You said you wanted a regular police patrol on the Lethbridge estate in Blackheath;</th>
<th>You said you wanted activities for older people in Lewisham Central ward;</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We</strong> gathered a group of residents together to design and commission heritage boards for the area.</td>
<td><strong>We</strong> worked with the police to provide this resulting in reduction in muggings in the area</td>
<td><strong>We</strong> supported St Swithun’s Church to set up a new group to get older people out and making new friends.</td>
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<tr>
<th>You said you wanted Girton Road car park in Sydenham cleaned up;</th>
<th>You said you wanted more provision for young people in Brockley ward;</th>
<th>You said you were concerned that hanging baskets in Ladywell wouldn’t be funded anymore;</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We</strong> cleaned it up and supported a new car boot sale venture.</td>
<td><strong>We</strong> negotiated two additional sessions for young people from the youth service.</td>
<td><strong>We</strong> allocated some of the Assembly Fund to continue having them.</td>
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<tr>
<th>e.g. being a Coordinating Group member, organising an event, delivering a project</th>
<th>e.g. attending Assembly meetings, voting for projects, taking part in activities like community events and clean ups</th>
<th>e.g. completing surveys and contacting the team remotely about particular issues</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Engaged</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responsive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passive</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g. reading Assembly leaflets or other information about their area</td>
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A number of wards use a ‘roadshow’ format to engage people who wouldn’t normally attend assembly meetings. In Evelyn a number of roadshows took place during 2011 and 2012, including with Vietnamese residents who normally don’t engage with the assembly. A special session was arranged with them, where they discussed their thoughts and concerns for their area. Vietnamese food and a translator helped participants feel comfortable and able to express their views. A number of issues that were raised have been referred to the appropriate Council departments to deal with and some now attend assembly meetings and feedback to their community. In Ladywell three roadshows took place in Ladywell Fields to encourage local people passing through the area to give their views on issues that they would like to see the assembly resolve; and to encourage them to attend future meetings.

In Downham and Whitefoot wards the assemblies are working closely with the Phoenix Community Empowerment Strategy Task Group to pro-actively and effectively engage local residents in a strategic manner.

In Bellingham the assembly has used a mapping exercise to engage with residents outside of the assembly meetings. Using visual maps and local information, it gives people the opportunity to say what they would like to see changed in their area. The information gathered is then fed into the action plan for progression and the people consulted are provided with feedback on what has been achieved.

In Telegraph Hill the assembly had concerns that engagement from the Honor Oak estate part of the ward was low; and that no funding applications had been received from that area in 2011-12. Due to the high level of need in this area the Assembly decided to ring fence part of the funding to help get projects and started. An initial meeting with key stakeholders was held to establish some ideas, and these ideas were then tested through a survey of 1400 households, either face to face at the door or hand delivered. An estate forum has been set up to drive forward the ideas and keep residents informed. Some of the first actions to be delivered will be a community start-up fund and a ‘I ♥ Honor Oak’ logo competition.

The assemblies programme continues to encourage participation by a wide range of people through taking part in community events and festivals across the borough, for example Blythe Hill Fields Festival and Downham Winter festival. At the Phoenix Community Housing festival (covering Bellingham, Downham and Whitefoot wards) assembly officers conducted a mapping exercise, a lucky dip for children and a ‘Name the Local Assembly Lion’ competition.

Older residents in the borough also have the opportunity to get involved in the Positive Ageing Council, which champions and debates issues affecting older people. As well as formal meetings the Positive Ageing Council organises intergenerational and social events. Visit www.lewisham.gov.uk/getinvolved/positive-ageing-council for more information.
FOCUS ON coordinating group

There are many ways you can get more involved with the assemblies. Every assembly has a smaller coordinating group that is made up of volunteers from the main assembly who help to plan and deliver the assembly meetings; advise on engagement and participation outside of meetings and drive the actions of the assembly forward. You don’t have to have any experience or skills or be part of a group to sit on a coordinating group – everyone is welcome.

Below, Whitefoot Coordinating Group member Jane Hearn tells us about her experience.

Why did you decide to get involved with your local assembly coordinating group?

I have worked in the area on and off for over 20 years and feel I know it and the local area, groups and organisations well. I have managed several projects which involve local residents in community activities and events and help to improve facilities and their area, and share information about what goes on.

What do you think are the main roles of the coordinating group?

Plan the agenda and meetings, discuss funding opportunities, and ward priorities and the support we can give to the community; and to plan and coordinate initiatives, events and activities in the ward. Liaise with other groups and organisations and encourage participation.

What difference do you think you can make (or have made) as a member of the coordinating group?

I believe that my knowledge and experience could be helpful to the coordinating group and that I could encourage others to find out what the group does and how they can be involved. I am particularly interested in volunteering. Everyone I meet has something to say about their area and I would like that to be articulated.

What do you think is the most successful project you have been involved in as a member of the coordinating group?

I was involved in the Clean Up of Castillon Road and the alleyway by Goldsmiths Community Centre last year. Being so visible meant we were able to talk to local people about their concerns and they could see we made a difference. A more recent event was the Big Jubilee Lunch in Beachborough Gardens, the coordinating group was very supportive and involved, and despite the weather it was a great success and brought different people together and some out of their houses to have a look!

What advice would you give to other people considering becoming a coordinating group member?

Give it a try! The group is very welcoming and there is no great time commitment, just a willingness to communicate, to share ideas and information. I’d like to see local people come along as guests to see how it works and what we discuss and plan, I think this would help overcome some people’s distrust / fear that it is all about the council.

You can also get involved in your local coordinating group. If you’re interested please don’t hesitate to contact us for an informal chat using the details on the back page.
You can also get involved through assembly working groups (or set up your own!) which focus on a key local issue that the wider assembly feels is important to local people.

Below, Lee Green parking working group Chair Wendy Lloyd tells us about her experience.

**Why did you decide to get involved with the working group?**

I decided to get involved with the working group having attended a meeting of the Lee Green Assembly. It was clear that parking had long been a contentious matter for the area and I felt very strongly that the Council needed challenging on the issue. I was aware that although a lot of people felt very strongly a working group needed some clear heads and I believed that my experience of researching, journalism and public speaking would be of use to the group, in combination with my frustration with the spiralling charges.

**What do you think are the main roles of the working group?**

I believe the main roles of the working group are to not only collate the views of the Lee Green residents and represent them as accurately as possible, but to also consider those views in conjunction with the policy making rationale of the council and other authorities so that we can make our conclusions in an intelligent and relevant matter. That way - hopefully! - our views are respected and cannot be so easily dismissed by people whom we might be challenging.

**What difference do you think you can make (or have made) as a member of the working group?**

It transpired early on at the working group that no-one put themselves forward for the role of chair. I was happy to take up the role of Chair as I have a great deal of experiences chairing debates and discussions in my broadcasting career. So, although I am not au fait with the protocol of committee meetings, I believe that I have - and hope to continue to have - a key role keeping the group focussed on the issues on the table. I have also been a key part of the presentation of the group’s findings to the Mayor and Cabinet.

**What do you think is the most successful outcome so far from the working group?**

I believe that the best outcome so far of the working group has been the introduction of 1 hour permits for the area which have offered a more reasonable option for residents with short stay visitors. I believe that our findings and strength of support from residents has made the parking policy makers aware of our concerns and displeasure and I am optimistic that our findings will be considered in their current parking policy review. However, there is still a lot still to achieve!

**What advice would you give to other people considering getting more involved in issues in their area?**

I would say to anyone thinking of getting more involved in local issues to be clear about what skills they can bring to the table. It isn’t just about feeling strongly about your own personal gripe - though that is clearly the usual catalyst for getting involved. It’s important to be able to be pragmatic about matters in order to take matters forward and to be able to listen to counter arguments. That said, all support registered for local issues is hugely important, so everyone who does feel strongly or has an interest in their community should be encouraged to attend Assembly meetings to keep up to date with local issues that affect them.

Have you got an idea for a working group in your area? Get in touch!
What others have said:

“The challenge to local government more widely is now to explore the potential for using this and similar approaches to put communities in control of mainstream decisions about services and budgets.”


“We have found the assemblies to be very informative about what is happening in the locale, a great place to network and a chance to get funding for our own projects is always welcome!”

Jenny Holland, Wooster & Stock estate agents, Forest Hill.

“[Lewisham Council’s local assemblies] is another example of building relationships between people with a view to improving the outcomes of communities. As people feel they have been involved in the decision to allocate funding to projects, their commitment to a project’s destination grows stronger.”


“I was impressed to see that empowering people is a way to offer better services with less council funds, as we share the same budget issues in Japan. I was also very impressed by the fact that empowering a community and promoting cohesion is not just an ideal, but also results in a stronger community.”

Kyoko Yoshimoto, Japan Local Government Centre (participant on Intercultural Cities study tour to Lewisham, 2012).

“What others have said...”

“The Telegraph Hill Assembly has been invaluable to Transport for London in designing, implementing and monitoring the Kender Street Triangle scheme. It not only provided a forum to channel feedback in a helpful way to understand the local issues but also to speak directly with those affected by the scheme so they understood the benefits, could influence the design and support its implementation.”

Simon Mouncey, Transport for London

“There was a very warm welcome and a good atmosphere. As this was my first assembly I didn’t know what to expect but it was a good meeting.” – Perry Vale resident, March 2012

“The meeting was good but I do think there should be a platform for ‘other issues’ to be discussed...Some issues discussed were not relevant to ‘local’ context.” – Bellingham resident, February 2012

“The voting event was fantastic, I was introduced to a range of projects with the opportunity to meet the promoters.” – Whitefoot resident, October 2011

“The Local Assembly’s help was very apparent and much appreciated in assisting the Open Futures Project to launch in Bellingham - helping young people find employment with local businesses. Through your guidance we were able to access the right funding channels and it also helped inspire this project, often identifying avenues and ideas that we hadn’t considered and like wise steering us in the right directing in gaining valuable advice and support.” – Sergeant Christopher Ellen, Bellingham Safer Neighbourhood Team

“It would be interesting if the assembly were to send around questionnaires to streets in the ward to find out what the plus and negative points are.” – New Cross Resident, January 2010

“Very interesting assembly, giving us a chance to meet our neighbours in the community.” – Blackheath resident, July 2011

“The assembly met my expectations because lots of people turned up from my local community. Local councillors were there to hear our views.” – Grove Park resident, June 2012

“The assembly allowed me to learn more about local issues, influence local decisions affecting my local area and also allowed me to feel included.” – Catford South resident, October 2011

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FOCUS ON engaging with traders

Town centre regeneration is an important priority for many assemblies. The local assemblies programme has stepped up its engagement with traders, recognising that the views and ideas of local businesses is an important part of the programme. Many traders now regularly attend assemblies and participate in developing projects to improve the town centres and shopping parades.

In some areas, assembly officers, Councillors and assembly volunteers undertake regular walkabouts, visiting shops and offering advice, welcoming new businesses, and maintaining an accurate database of businesses. Quarterly trader newsletters are delivered by hand before each assembly meeting in some areas.

The assemblies also support the formation of new trader’s associations, for example in Forest Hill and Leegate.

In Sydenham the assembly priority of ‘vibrant high street’ is developed and delivered through the town centre steering group, where the assembly, traders and other stakeholders come together to discuss issues and ways to resolve them. The group has worked on many projects; including a community toilet scheme where local cafés and shops are given a small fee to allow the public to use their toilets; late night shopping days; and enforcement of A-boards and illegal forecourt trading.

In Forest Hill, the Kirkdale Village Trader’s Association has been instrumental in revitalising this isolated part of the ward. The assembly has supported them with several schemes and funded £1000 for a beautification project, which asked local people what they wanted to improve the image of the area.

In Lewisham Central the assembly teamed up with the local shopping centre to fund and deliver the Christmas tree and associated switch-on ceremony which helps to attract more people into the town centre to do their Christmas shopping.

FOCUS ON working with partners

Assemblies have a strong history of working with others to deliver results, recognising that many organisations have a part to play in improving our local neighbourhoods. Examples of how the assemblies have been working with our voluntary and statutory partners are given below.

In Downham the assembly sits as a partner on the new Downham Celebrates Committee. This is an active partnership including Councillors, residents, service providers and festival organisers. Their aim is to increase the opportunity for residents to engage in local community, cultural and sporting events. They support local events, exchange information and advice, and seek sustainable funding to ensure these events can continue year after year.

In Rushey Green the assembly is working with Rushey Green Timebank to facilitate a community garden in a large patch of disused land at the top of Catford Hill. The project will encourage local people to learn about gardening, growing fruit and vegetables, meet their neighbours and make new friends.

In Telegraph Hill a network of local groups and providers was brought together to encourage partnership working and information sharing to help deliver the assembly’s action plan. It helps to facilitate the use of different approaches; and the group recently had its first success with the Adventure Playground winning Lottery funding after a joint bid that came out of the network.

In Lee Green and Telegraph Hill the Council and local assemblies are working in partnership with Spice to create a time credit programme to encourage people who wouldn’t normally volunteer. In these two pilot areas residents will be thanked for offering their time to the community with time credits that give access to services and activities, such as Millwall football tickets, beauty treatments and ten pin bowling. It is hoped that the programme will be extended to other areas in the borough over time.
FOCUS ON engaging with young people

Whilst local assemblies encourage and welcome young people to attend their meetings they recognise that supplementing this with other forms of engagement is helpful in ensuring as many young people have a voice about their local area as possible.

In this past year Brockley has created a youth assembly which has been facilitated by the assembly and Council’s youth service. The idea was to empower young people to make more informed decisions and understand how the decision-making process works in Lewisham, London and nationally. A core group of young people from across the ward have met several times, and have also visited City Hall. They are now planning a trip to the Houses of Parliament.

In Bellingham the assembly wanted young people to be more involved in allocating assembly funding, and agreed that one third of the 2010-12 funding should be voted on by young people. The coordinating group went on to adopt a youth engagement strategy which is now being implemented.

Activities for young people is a priority in Catford South ward and the assembly agreed to ring-fence some funding to allow young people to decide how to spend it. The School Council at Conisborough College have led on this project, deciding the process and how to engage with young people in the ward. They used an initial survey to identify what young people wanted to see happening, when and where; with other 700 young people taking part. A second survey was then carried out presenting young people with a shopping list of different activities. A football academy, drama club, trampolining club and a cheerleading club were the final winners. Local organisation, Teachsport, have been commissioned to deliver these activities.

Following on from their previous successful youth engagement, Crofton Park assembly decided to again ring-fence £10,000 from the 2010-12 fund for young people to allocate. Working through the joint youth Safer Neighbourhood panel and youth assembly, pupils at Prendergast Ladywell Fields planned how the funding should be distributed. All of the primary schools were invited to bring one idea to present to everyone at a funding event. Pupils from all the schools voted on their favourite ideas; and these were developed further afterwards. The coordinating group managed to ensure that an idea from every school was used in some way, and much of what was suggested is being delivered without money and by local organisations helping out. The projects that were funded from the £10,000 are an art gallery and internet café at the Library; a bed for every school at the new community garden; and for activities to be delivered through Walk in Space (the youth organisation set up through the previous year’s ring-fenced funding for young people).

Images from Crofton Park’s youth project.
Lewisham is changing...

Lewisham borough as a place is rapidly changing with new developments, regeneration and community-led improvements. The local assemblies have been involved in many aspects of this.

With support from the assembly, the Grove Park Community Group teamed up with the Prince’s Foundation in February 2012 to hold a series of community planning events with designers, local stakeholders and the wider public. The workshops asked station users, members of the local community and traders how they would like the central area around the station and shops changed. The results were compiled into a report which looked at 12 month ‘start now’ actions; and 5 year ‘think ahead’ strategy.

Last year retail guru Mary Portas was commissioned to carry out an independent review of Britain’s failing high streets. The government subsequently announced two rounds of funding of £2.5m to 27 pilot towns to test the recommendations made in the review. Supported by the local assembly programme, Forest Hill, Kirkdale, and Sydenham submitted a bid and were successful in the second round, and will be awarded up to £100k. The bid included creating two community hubs (Jack and Jill) in high street shops renovated for exhibitions, business workshops and creative community engagement; the letting of 12 vacant units to an eclectic mix of businesses and organisations as part of a large scale ‘pop-up’ project; and the initiation of a series of subsidised pilot markets with incentives for local traders.

The local assembly programme has supported the development of the Council’s approach to distributing the £100k High Street Innovation Fund; a fund to help reduce the number of empty shop premises in the borough. The assemblies programme will also help to support and encourage take-up of the funding when it becomes available to businesses, organisations and groups to apply for it.

In New Cross and Evelyn there are dozens of regeneration projects underway that will provide significant numbers of new homes and jobs for the area, along with major improvements to the local infrastructure and environment. The local assemblies have been kept up to date with these developments and the meetings have provided the opportunity for local residents to raise their concerns and questions.

The local assemblies team and the Planning Service ran a consultation event in April 2012 for assembly coordinating group members to discuss and contribute to emerging planning policies. The Council is preparing a series of planning documents that are collectively known as the Local Development Framework. The main document is called the Core Strategy and was adopted in June 2011. The Council is now preparing ‘development policies’, which guide what will and won’t get planning permission. At the workshop attendees were invited to give their input into what these development policies might look like, and what issues were important to them. Detailed discussions took place on five topics including community facilities; character areas and conservation areas; and retaining pubs and number of take away shops. The Planning Service will use the feedback from the event, along with continued discussion with the community, to help shape the new policies.
A Councillor’s perspective

Elected local Councillors play a key role in the assembly through chairing, facilitating local people to get things done and providing leadership.

Below, Sydenham Assembly Chair and Cabinet Member for Community Services Councillor Chris Best gives us her view.

What is the role of chair of an assembly?
To provide leadership to the local community and bring together residents, businesses and organisations for the benefit of the ward. Developing the Coordinating Group and the local charter so that our priorities are clear and measurable.

What has been your highlight of being an Assembly chair?
Getting people involved and watching the Assembly grow with the support of a strong Coordinating Group. We have been able to work on the communication and produce a quarterly newsletter in colour, as well as an annual report. The highlight has been engaging with young people and getting them to vote in the democratic process.

What do you feel is the most successful thing your assembly has achieved so far?
Attracting additional investment to the ward from developing and delivering on the priorities agreed by the Assembly. Specifically in our top five priorities we have:

• For young people provided a new £3.5 million youth centre through MySpace
• Worked on community safety through the SNT and helped reduce the number of street drinkers
• Our high street has the opportunity to become vibrant through the Portas Pilot funds and S106 match funding - as well as the community building on being inclusive through the Sydenham Arts and Music Festival
• Promoted a clean and green environment - our green flag parks are stunning with cricket returning to Mayow Park and funding for the Pavilion
• Transport improvements in the delivery of the East London Line plus the £3.5 million for the high street and Station Approach improvements, road safety in Mayow Road and elsewhere in the ward etc

What advice would you give other Cllrs about becoming chair of an assembly?
Recognise that it takes time, energy and commitment to deliver an inclusive assembly - it requires patience to take the time to talk to residents and get them to come along to the Assembly meeting or take part in a local event. Getting people involved in civic activities is not a quick process. They have to believe that their views are important and that feedback is provided on what can be realistically achieved - and the part they can play in reaching that goal. It requires ward members to get out and about and ensure residents know how to contact you about issues of concern as well as ideas for improvement.

From your Cabinet Member perspective, how do you see assemblies developing over the next few years?
I think we now have building blocks in place in each of the wards - each area is different and has developed its own way of working. The Localism Act provides the opportunity for communities to take further control and the assemblies should support the residents in the direction they wish to go.
Local people in **Catford South** ward wanted to hold an event to celebrate the Olympics; and for it to be community-led and sustainable for future years. Corbett Residents Association took the lead on the project and consulted with the assembly throughout. The event was held in June and had two parts, an inter-school sports day and a wider community event. Both days were hugely successful; the schools are keen to participate again next year; and the tables, marquees, bunting and other things bought will mean the event is sustainable for future years.

The summer festival in **Rushey Green** ward has been organised by the assembly for the last two years, and takes place in the Green Squares along Rushey Green. A strong working group have helped to plan and deliver the event; including raising donations from local sponsors such as McDonalds, Barclays bank and housing associations. Over 300 people attended the 2012 festival and it is fast becoming a much loved annual event.

**Rushey Green Summer Festival**

In **Crofton Park** the assembly wanted to find ways to engage with people in a different way; especially young families and young professionals who are less represented at meetings. Early in 2011 the idea for a community carnival was raised at the assembly; and volunteers formed a working group to plan and deliver the event. The first carnival took place in July 2011 and was a great success with other 400 people attending; and included children's activities, live bands, and a bar run by the Brockley Jack pub. The carnival took place again in July 2012, and was run entirely by local groups, residents and businesses, following the initial support they had from the assembly to initiate it in 2011.

**Grove Park** ward is a very diverse ward but this isn’t always reflected in the more formal assembly meetings. The assembly wanted to get people involved in other ways and decided to organise a Jubilee event which was planned, funded and delivered by the Assembly. Over 500 people attended the day, and the audience was very diverse. The event also helped to spread the message about the assembly, for example through engaging with schools to promote the event and giving parents a fun, free weekend activity to take their children to.

The Telegraph Hill Assembly organised the Come and Look Day in 2011 to raise awareness of all the venues and activities taking place across the ward and get more people involved and active in their community. The ward has three quite distinct areas, and the Come and Look Day encourages people to travel outside of the immediate neighbourhood and meet their wider ward neighbours. Activities as diverse as gardening, line dancing and reflexology take place across seven venues in the ward. The event is planned again for autumn 2012.

**Grove Park Jubilee event**
FOCUS ON planning an event

Events play a key role in the assemblies because they help bring people together with their neighbours to have fun and get to know each other. A range of events have been organised over the past year. These wouldn’t have happened without the commitment of local volunteers.

Below, Karen Small, volunteer organiser of the Rushey Green Festival, tells us why she got involved.

Why did you decide to get involved with planning a community event?
I decided to get involved with planning the Summer Festival because I know that there is so much that the Rushey Green ward has to offer. It is a melting pot of many different cultures and felt that this would be an opportunity to celebrate this. The festival enabled the community to come together to celebrate and to enjoy the talents and skills of those living, working and volunteering in the borough. Most importantly, by offering my skills in event and project management I was able to give something back to the community in which I live. It is such a great feeling to see people happy because of something that you were involved in or were able to do.

What do you think are the main roles of the working group in planning a successful event?
First you must have a purpose, a plan and a group of people or steering group to bring it to fruition. Upon having all this in place the main roles and responsibilities would be:
• commitment, being realistic with the time you have to offer, attending planning meetings and being proactive!
• being objective, being able to work a long side others in a group environment and as an individual to follow through on tasks and objectives set.
• Pull together to make things happen ie: problem solve when faced with challenges
• Being selfless - sometimes things are not how we would like them but it is better to act for the common good of the event and the people you are serving (the community)!
• Following through with tasks and responsibilities in accordance with deadlines set
• Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk!
• Being respectful of others views and what they may bring to the table, so discuss and consider all things and ideas presented.

What difference do you think you can make (or have made) as a member of the group?
I believe that my knowledge and relationships with local businesses and residents in our local community enabled me to bring more variety and support to the event. I was able engage with people personally to raise interest and to encourage them to get involved. Being on the ground gives one a better insight as to what people want or would enjoy at a community event. I was also able to offer my expertise in Social Bartering and health and safety elements of running an event.

What do you think is the most successful outcome from the event?
This is a hard one to answer as there were many positive and successful outcomes including the community coming together, participating and enjoying themselves and the interest from those who want to help to make it bigger and better! If I had to say what I thought was the most successful outcome was the mix of those who attended and Heidi Alexander being the life and soul of the event.

What advice would you give to other people considering getting more involved in planning community events?
Consider the feasibility of the event with regard to funding, location/venue, resources, target audience and all of the above! But the most important thing is to remember that each event is different and brings different challenges.

Would you like to work with us on an event in your area? Get in touch!
Interesting & effective meetings

During 2011-12 every assembly met formally three or four times; and the coordinating group who helps to plan the agenda for these meetings have been working on different ways of keeping the meetings interesting and effective.

The day, time and venue for assembly meetings always has an impact on who can attend; and it is the policy of the assembly programme to try to vary all of these so as many people as possible have the chance to attend. In Forest Hill, for example, the assembly trialled a Sunday assembly meeting in August 2011. The meeting was well attended with good feedback. Forest Hill also regularly move the location of their assembly meetings, and recently used the Horniman Museum for the first time; with participants pleased to be using the well-known landmark.

In Bellingham the coordinating group wanted to make the November 2011 meeting more interactive and so held a sing-a-long with Lisa Powell from Sing Out. She introduced the Sing Out project and at the end had the whole Assembly singing Van Morrison’s Moondance.

Catford South assembly were keen to promote local businesses through the assembly, and have encouraged local food outlets to sponsor the food for meetings in return for raising their profile with local people. The coordinating group also encourage local people to get involved in the production and publicity of the meetings, for example a resident designs their local newsletter free of charge.

To help focus discussions and achieve outcomes, Perry Vale Assembly has used themed meetings. For example, they had one meeting on sport and the Olympics with demos from an award winning basketball team based in the ward.

Communicating assemblies

The local assemblies have always communicated information about meetings, achievements and how you can get involved across a variety of mediums, but 2012 saw the launch of some new promotions.

A film was commissioned to showcase a snapshot of what assemblies have been doing recently, and features four assembly case studies. It tells the story of assemblies through the voice of people involved using their own words to talk about their involvement. The film was produced by Small Fry Films who are a local company and involved in the Brockley assembly.

A new publicity campaign was launched in summer 2012 - ‘what could you achieve’. The idea behind this campaign is to show what individuals can achieve through their assembly and encourage others to get involved. The campaign was used throughout the Lewisham Council webpages, on street advertisement boards and through postcards that are used at events and engagement activities. In August the local assemblies joined the festivities at the Blackheath Big Screen, where Olympic coverage was screened live alongside lots of fun and active things for people to do. The assemblies teamed up with Teatro Vivo, local Lewisham-based theatre company, to put on two comedy theatre pieces – Lewisham Amateur Assemblies Athletics Association Sports Day – which featured five fictitious Olympic sports, such as slow motion sprint and parent and child show jumping. The performances promoted the work of the assemblies and engaged people in a creative and fun way.

Visit www.lewisham.gov.uk/localassemblies to see the film and for more information.
FOCUS ON funding

Each assembly had a pot of £43,750 to allocate towards projects that met their priorities during 2010-12, and over 220 projects were funded.

An example of how assembly funding helps to generate further match funding is Blackheath, where the assembly awarded £30,000 to the new community library at Age Exchange in the village. This funding and the support of the community enabled Age Exchange to access a further £629,000 from backers and trustees.

Another example of using assembly funding as leverage is Lee Green. The assembly identified the under-utilisation of Manor Park and the associated anti-social behaviour as a priority. A new bridge and entrance to the park was suggested and the assembly agreed the £10,000 backing required to access further funding from the Environment Agency. This funding was secured so the £10,000 was returned to the assembly to allocate to other projects. In addition, the assembly funded bringing the building in the park back into use; it is now used as an ecological classroom for local schools, a café and toilets. The park is now well-used and loved thanks to the assembly’s actions.

Assemblies also generate additional support for their projects on a smaller scale. In Sydenham support from the assembly for a mosaic project persuaded local businesses to also sponsor roundels. In Brockley a number of small funding awards were supplemented by many hours of in-kind volunteer support; for example Wickham Mews and Breakspears Mews both applied for a small fund for materials and local residents undertook the improvement works. In Catford South a number of new groups were awarded ‘start-up’ funding; a small amount of money to start a project, for example the knitting and sewing club started from scratch and now has many members and is self-sufficient.

Crofton Park Assembly has used a commissioning approach in distributing its funding, which has ensured a more strategic approach to how it is invested. The action plan was reviewed by the whole assembly, and new ideas for projects generated. These were then analysed by the coordinating group who identified how the ideas could be delivered. For those that required funding the coordinating group worked these into fully costed proposals and presented these back to the assembly. On agreement from the full assembly the coordinating group and other volunteers then commissioned and implemented the projects. Assemblies have also accessed other funding sources to help deliver their priorities.

Rushey Green, Lewisham Central and Downham wards were all awarded funding from the Community First initiative. This £80m government-funded programme has been set up to help communities identify their strengths and local priorities. Downham ward was allocated £33,910 for 2012-15; and has used the assembly as the vehicle through which to promote the funding, identify ward priorities and supporting the funding panel.

In August 2011 Forest Hill Assembly trialled a new approach to allocating funds at an assembly meeting. Instead of having presentations from groups followed by voting they used a marketplace style approach. Each group applying for funding was given a stall where they set up pictures, posters and other information about their project. Assembly attendees then walked around the room speaking with the groups and asking questions before scoring each one later in the meeting. The format of the meeting was very successful with other assemblies now replicating it.

All of the assemblies have young people as a priority, and over a third of the 2010-12 Assembly Fund was allocated to young people’s projects. Examples include funding Elevating Success to deliver a summer programme of activities in the Mercator estate in Lewisham Central; funding Lewisham Community Sports to provide a 6 week summer programme to help get young people involved in sport in Ladywell ward; and funding the XLP bus in Rushey Green to provide a place young people can go to learn about music and art. Ladywell Youth Village is a good example of where three assemblies (Rushey Green, Ladywell, Lewisham Central) have worked together to provide provision for young people.

It is recognised that the same groups are often successful in attracting funding each year. As such the programme developed a ‘help me help you’ workshops to capacity build and assist new and inexperienced groups with the process. The model consists of two parts; first focusing on project ideas, practicalities and budgets. The second part provides techniques for presenting projects to the Assembly meeting. In Evelyn, the pilot ward, 9 groups participated and more than half were successful in receiving funding from the assembly. The principles of the model are now used in other areas of the borough.