

The Role of the Community Representative

One of the ways that we involve residents in our Local Committees is through the work of the Community representative. These are local people who attend the Local Committee to represent their communities.

This paper has been written to clarify the role of the Community Representative and to provide information on how we can support you in your role.

The role can include some or all of the following:

- To represent the interests of your community (geographic or interest)
- To find ways of passing information to the Local Committee from the group you represent and to feedback information from the Committee
- To take part in the discussion and debate at the Local Committee meetings
- To submit items for inclusion on the Local Committee agenda (we would like you to do this at least three weeks before the meeting so that we can consider the issues raised)
- To present a petition
- To submit questions
- To talk with other Community Representatives
- To take part in consultations or events
- To help attract volunteers to the work of the Council
- To bring your expertise or local knowledge to decision making

Requirements for the role

- To be accountable to the community you represent
- To represent a group in the Local Committee area
- To represent the views of your group or community
- To regularly attend meetings to take part in discussions and to feedback information to other residents

Ideally, your group should be Friends of a Park group, a tenants group, a Residents Association, or a group concerned with Council or public services.

How do I become a Community Representative?

Your group can nominate a Community Representative in any way it sees fit. Once your group has decided that they would like to nominate a Community Representative to the Local Committee and that you are to be the nominee, you should fill out the application form. This can be found at www.sutton.gov.uk or is available on request from the Community Development Officer.

The completed form should be sent to the appropriate Community Development Officer and will then be considered at the next relevant Local Committee meeting. The London Borough of Sutton's Constitution states that the Local Committee needs to approve that your application be put forward for agreement at the next Full Council meeting. Once this agreement is obtained, you become an authorised Community Representative. Community Representatives can maintain their role for as long as your group wishes you to do so.

If a Group wishes to replace their community Representative, a letter or email can be sent to the Community Development Officer. There is no requirement to find a replacement, although we would urge you to do so.

What can community representatives do?

The role can be very wide. The only expectation is that you help shape the discussion and debate at Local Committee meetings.

This could include:

- Starting petitions on key areas of concern in the local area
- Providing information on local trends or activities
- Talking with local residents to identify requests or opinions
- Identify local activities that could benefit from support or advertising at the Local Committee, for example a local street party
- Submit questions of local importance at the Local Committee
- Identify opportunities for applications for a Neighbourhood Grant
- Help identify possible Public Realm projects
- Consider whether local people can help projects that need volunteers

What will the Council do to help?

- Support you by providing information, guidance or practical assistance where required
- Assist you to work with your community or group
- Assist in putting you in touch with appropriate contacts or external organisations
- Build a network of Community Representatives so you can talk with and learn from each other
- Respond to issues raised and ensure appropriate feedback is provided

Where can you go for help?

For new Community Representatives, committee meetings may not always be the best place to find out the business of the Committee for the first time. There are plenty of ways to find out this information. You can contact the Community Development Officer or read through previous minutes and agendas to find out what has been discussed (www.sutton.gov.uk/committee calendar).

Building a Community Representatives Network

We aim to support you and develop your role. Some of the ways we are seeking to do this is by carrying out regular surveys and also by building a network that you can work within.

Do you recognise that you need to draw on the expertise of others in some ways? Do you have knowledge or skills in a particular area that you are willing to share with others?

For example, you may have run an event, be an expert in consultation, in public speaking, in catering or website design, in drawing up newsletters or accounts, in dealing with a particular service (such as Buses, Water, Police). Others may have the skills you need.

If you have any particular needs or knowledge you would like to share, why not let your Community Development Officer know so that we can help put you in touch with other Community Representatives.

Thank you for taking part and taking pride

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