

CASE STUDY: Local Society Seminar

High level discussion on the changing role of local authorities and councillors in delivering the Big Society

About

The Local Society seminar, organised by Involve, Urban Forum and Local Government Leadership, took place on 4 February 2011. The event brought together over 40 senior key figures from across the public, civic and private sectors as well as local and national politicians to discuss the role of councillors and councils in building strong local communities and how the relationship between the citizen and the state could be practically and collectively changed.

Background

The relationships between sectors, citizens and the state and local and national government are being fundamentally reconfigured through policy priorities around the Big Society, localism and public sector reform. There is a need to transform the role of local government in the new sector.

Purpose

The main purpose of the seminar was to help progress thinking and action by local government and their partners locally.

Intended outcomes were:

- To inform emerging next practise on localism and public sector reform through ideas and experience of those leading the field
- To explore how councils and councillors should be involved at the core of the changing relationship between citizen and the state



Name of project:

Local Society Seminar

Type of project:

Citizen engagement in challenging issues

Date:

2011

Partners:

Local Government Leadership and Urban Forum

Contact details:

Ingrid Prikken ingrid@involve.org.uk

Links to relevant sources:

Local Society
www.localsociety.org.uk

Urban Forum
www.urbanforum.org.uk

Local Government Leadership
www.localleadership.gov.uk

About Involve:

Involve believes that honest and open dialogue between citizens and government strengthens democracy, helps make better decisions and leads to more innovative and efficient public services. We work with government, elected representatives and civil society organisations to open new channels for dialogue at all levels of government and society.

The logo for Involve, featuring the word "involve" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'i' is stylized with a vertical bar to its left.

Project Activities

The event was by invitation only, and brought together over 40 key figures from across public, civil society and private sectors that are making a significant contribution in this area.

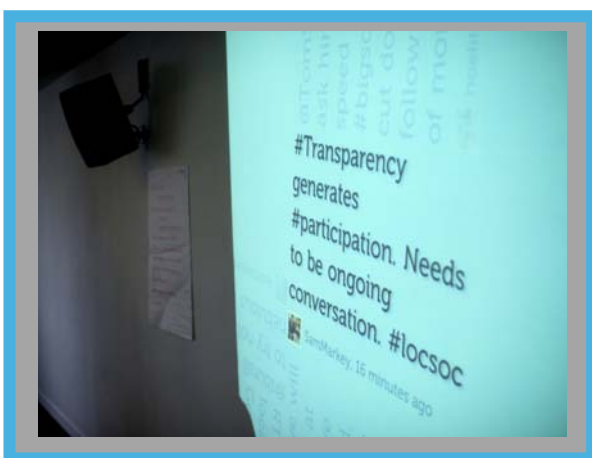
The event was styled as a World Cafe, with no top table or power point presentations, which allowed for quality discussion. The discussion was themed to tackle three important questions:

1. Seeing the bigger picture: how does the strategic role of the local government need to transform?
2. Where are the new lines drawn for accountability and risk in the new settlement?
3. From investment to divestment: what role should the public sector play in diversifying service provision in a way that supports stronger local communities?

Six 'provocateurs' introduced each discussion round with a short contribution aimed to provoke and stimulate discussion on three themes.

At six tables, with eight to ten participants each, each theme was discussed and the ideas were captured on paper table clothes and flip charts. In addition an active discussion was taking place on twitter. Participants changed tables after each discussion round, in order to better disperse new ideas and information and allow for active networking. Special guest Lord Nat Wei, the government advisor on the Big Society, presented his view on the day's discussion.

The seminar has a dedicated website www.localsociety.org.uk, which includes short discussion papers prepared by the provocateurs, a summary report of the seminar, blogs from participants, photo's and videos from the event.



For more information on this project or the work Involve does, please contact us.

Involve
Royal London House
22 – 25 Finsbury Square
London
EC2A 1DX

Tel: +44 (0) 207 920 6470
Email: info@involve.org.uk
Web: www.involve.org.uk

“A really helpful and thought provoking day” – Local Society participant

“Excellent, provocative and inspiring” – Local Society Participant
Results

The seminar perhaps resulted in more questions than answers, but showed that the process of new thinking and discussing solutions is already well on the way. It was successful at bringing together people who had not met before, but had much to share in active networking. Participants enthusiastically and constructively contributed their experiences and ideas. Guests found the provocateurs statements stimulating and were impressed with the extent to which they could actively contribute to the discussion. The more conversations that take place, the more likely it is that new ideas will be identified and implemented.

Read the report [here](http://www.localsociety.org.uk/uploads/4/1/8/9/4189828/localsociety2011_seminar_report.pdf)
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