



Report and Evaluation

The Barnet Council Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity

Dr. Giannina Warren

Dr. Johan Siebers

Beatrice Colzani, Leyli Green, Jibril Salifu

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report, commissioned by Barnet Council and written by Middlesex University London, contains an evaluation of the Barnet Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity, held between February and May 2023. The report deals with the quality of the deliberative processes that took place, the communication the Council arranged regarding it, and the embedding of the Assembly in the Council's ongoing decision-making processes regarding climate change mitigation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Giannina Warren is an award-winning Senior Lecturer in Place Branding and Promotional Culture and the Programme Leader for BA Advertising, PR and Branding and MA Place Branding at Middlesex University.

An international thought leader in Place Branding, she has spearheaded and launched the world's first MA in the discipline, as well as a series of validated training tools, short courses and masterclasses.

Giannina's career included 17 years in Toronto, Canada as a specialist in visual identity, branding, advertising and public relations in high-impact sectors such as finance, energy, legal, tourism, festivals and economic development. She spent six years at Toronto City Hall, managing city branding strategies, international promotional campaigns for public cultural events, resident engagement programmes and tourism initiatives.

Professor Johan Siebers is Professor of Philosophy of Language and Communication, and University Theme Director for Sustainable Communities and the Environment. He provides leadership for the University's contribution to creating sustainable societies. Locally, nationally, and around the world, Middlesex supports people to make their communities more sustainable and fairer and to protect the environment. Globally, Middlesex' expertise influences economic, social and environmental policy and practice, enabling stakeholders to create change within communities.

Johan's research focuses on dialogue, anticipation, hope and futurity as dimensions of meaningful communication. He is also involved in the UKRI's Treescapes programme, which aims to understand the environmental and societal benefits of landscapes in which trees play a significant role and which underpins the UK's efforts to significantly increase woodlands and forests as part of climate change mitigation.

The lead researchers were supported by Beatrice Colzani and Leyli Green, students in Advertising, Public Relations and Branding, and Jibril Salifu, PhD researcher in Place Branding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This comprehensive report provides an evaluation for Barnet Council of their Citizens' Assembly on Climate change and Biodiversity. A team of communication researchers from Middlesex University undertook this evaluation, which consisted of session observations, a participant questionnaire, a focus group and interviews with a range of people involved in the running of the Assembly, including staff from Barnet Council and TPXimpact, the company that was appointed to lead the sessions, and have extensive 'deliberative democracy' experience.

Overall, the report concludes that the Citizens' Assembly was perceived positively by participants and other stakeholders, that the outcomes can have a material influence on decision making processes in the Council and that the Citizen's Assembly project represents good value for money. Participants reported feeling able to voice their opinions; feeling listened to; valuing the content input by specialists and the small group discussion format, leading to collective proposals and decisions in most cases. They also reported imbalances in the quality of facilitation, occasional lack of engagement from participants, presenters and facilitators and some critique of a perceived pro-climate-action bias among the selected participants.

Depending on follow-up and learnings being taken forward for future initiatives, this first Citizens' Assembly for the Borough can become a powerful lever to create both legitimacy for Barnet's Sustainability action plan as well as stimulate behaviour and attitude changes among Barnet residents. The Assembly can also contribute to fostering a sense of co-ownership of the action plan between Council and residents. A set of recommendations have been formulated on the basis of the data analysis that was conducted.

By implementing these strategic recommendations, the Council can strengthen inclusivity, transparency, and political support while fostering a culture of collaboration and environmental citizenship within the community. These efforts will ensure that the Citizens' Assembly, and any future follow-up or similar interventions, will have a meaningful and lasting impact on shaping effective sustainability policies and initiatives in the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Allocate sufficient time, resources and personnel for successful implementation of the Citizens' Assembly.
- Continue to be open and transparent about the ongoing process to all constituencies.
- Maintain political visibility and foster continued political legitimacy for deliberative democracy initiatives that support policy development.

PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCE

- Enhance the already robust recruitment process for Citizens' Assembly participants to ensure a diverse range of perspectives, including sceptical voices on climate change.
- Implement a streamlined and direct email delivery system for online resources to enhance accessibility and increase participants' engagement during the Assembly process.
- Strengthen the facilitator training program by incorporating soft skills development and consider a blended team approach that includes both professional facilitators and trained staff volunteers for future Citizens' Assemblies.

COMMUNICATION AND FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

- Foster long-term engagement and transparency by facilitating structural, ongoing dialogue and communication with Citizens' Assembly participants and the wider community.
- Strengthen and expand the strategic communications and public engagement efforts to maintain momentum and foster continuous community engagement beyond the Citizen's Assembly.
- Strengthen Barnet Council's social media presence by implementing small but impactful improvements, including creating a cohesive visual identity, tailoring content for each platform, and strategically utilising hashtags for increased brand awareness and interactions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE REPORT	2
ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	5
INTRODUCTION	7
METHODOLOGY.....	8
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
FINDINGS	10
PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES.....	10
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY.....	11
POLITICAL CHAMPIONING AND SUPPORT	11
RESOURCES AND PERSONNEL.....	12
<i>Recommendations</i>	13
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE.....	14
DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION.....	14
FACILITATION	20
<i>Recommendations</i>	22
COMMUNICATION AND FURTHER ENGAGEMENT.....	23
POST-ASSEMBLY ACTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP	23
COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY	24
SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS.....	25
<i>Recommendations</i>	29
CONCLUSIONS	31
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	31
<i>PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES</i>	31
<i>PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCE</i>	31
<i>COMMUNICATION AND FURTHER ENGAGEMENT</i>	32
REFERENCES	33
APPENDIX	34

INTRODUCTION

In January 2023, Barnet Council launched an ambitious campaign known as "BarNET Zero" with the goal of transforming the borough into a net-zero community by 2042. This initiative was borne out of the new appointed Labour administrations' declaration of a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in May 2022, where they set the target of becoming a Net Zero council by 2030 and a Net Zero borough no later than 2042.

The campaign is a comprehensive sustainability project designed to bring residents, communities, and businesses together on the borough's journey to Net Zero. It provides advice, information, and support to all stakeholders, aiming to create a more sustainable borough. The BarNET ZERO campaign is a long-term initiative that will continue to evolve as Barnet progresses towards achieving its net zero carbon goal, demonstrating the borough's commitment to sustainability and climate action.

A main pillar of the BarNET ZERO Action Plan was the implementation of a Citizens' Assembly – a core manifesto commitment of the new incoming administration. The purpose of the Assembly was to build resilience among citizens, engender collective responsibility and inform the Council about chosen preferred priorities relating to sustainability and how residents, communities and businesses, alongside the council and its partners, may work together in achieving the Net Zero target by 2042.

The Citizens' Assembly (<https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/barnets-citizen-assembly>) was held on the Hendon campus of Middlesex University between February and May 2023, in parallel with the Barnet Young People's Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity ([Young Peoples' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity | Engage Barnet](#)); thereby hearing the views of 60 people from across the borough, aged 12-90 years

Barnet Council approached Middlesex University with the request to conduct an evaluation study of the Citizens' Assembly. The Young People's Assembly was not included due to the limited opportunity for observation of the Assembly sessions.

The evaluation study was conducted by the Media Department and the Theme Director for Sustainable Communities. The focus was on the following topics:

1. The quality of the deliberative process that took place during the Assembly sessions
2. Participants' experiences of the process
3. Legitimacy and effectiveness of the Assembly in furthering the aims of the Council's road map to Net Zero for Council and Borough
4. The communication strategy supporting the Assembly
5. Value for money

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of a range of data collection methods:

1. Observation of selected Assembly sessions
2. Administration of a questionnaire on three occasions to track developments in participants' experiences
3. Post-session focus group for participants (n=4)
4. Interviews with Council staff involved in the process as well as with staff members of TPX, the company that delivered the Assembly on behalf of the council.

Transcripts of interviews and focus group sessions were thematically analysed. All collected data was stored securely on Middlesex' server and will be deleted after completion of the study.

A draft interim report containing findings and recommendations was planned for completion by 31 July 2023, with a final version to be presented to the Council in September 2023. Further case study publications in academic outlets will be produced as well, with all publications acknowledging the Council and made available to the Council.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research team conducted an extensive literature search on deliberative consultation and citizens' assemblies, which informed the analysis and evaluation (see bibliography provided).

More specifically, in developing the research design for this study, we used Isaacs' (1999) well-established model of dialogue as a process of thinking together in institutional contexts, to provide us with a set of roles, behaviours and principles of collective deliberation to focus on in our evaluation.

Each of these can be characterised by a brief function descriptor (Isaacs 1999, pp. 418-420):

Roles in collective dialogue and deliberation

1. **Move:** without movers, there is no direction.
2. **Follow:** without followers, there is no completion.
3. **Oppose:** without opposers, there is no correction.
4. **Bystand:** without bystanders, there is perspective.

Behavioural capacities in collective dialogue and deliberation

1. **Voicing:** speaking the truth of one's own authority; what one really is and thinks. Asks: What needs to be said?
2. **Listening:** without resistance or imposition. Asks: How does this feel?
3. **Respecting:** Awareness of the integrity of another's position and the impossibility of understanding it fully. Asks: How does this fit?
4. **Suspending:** suspension of assumptions, judgment and certainty. Asks: How does this work?

Principles of collective dialogue and deliberation

1. **Unfolding: there is a constant implicate potential unfolding through and around us.**
2. **Participation: I am in the world, and the world is in me.**
3. **Coherence: Everything is already whole. I must look for the way that it is.**
4. **Awareness: Self-perception. I am aware of many voices within myself.**

These twelve concepts can be used as a model and standard for high-quality collective thinking, deliberation and decision-making. They thus have a normative aspect: they tell us how to do this kind of group communication well. But they also have a descriptive aspect.

By analysing concrete dialogic situations in terms of how these roles, behaviours and principles are manifested in these situations, we gain an insight into the actual quality of a specific deliberation: what went well, what didn't go so well. We can then also use the analysis to target concrete actions aimed at improving collective dialogue.

Finally, this model can be used to facilitate reflection by dialogue participants on their own experiences as it provides an articulation of the key dynamics in deliberative processes. We have made use of all of these in our analysis and recommendations.

FINDINGS

Processes and Procedures

Setting up a Citizens' Assembly requires a well-structured and carefully planned process to ensure legitimacy, transparency, political will, and economic expediency. The commissioning body must start by defining the objectives, scope, and desired outcomes of the Assembly, ensuring they align with the community's needs and priorities. These factors must be embedded into the process of policy-decision making, and strategic communication efforts can build legitimacy and profile, ensuring both citizens as well as decision-makers see the value in undertaking the exercise (Wells et al., 2021). Moreover, the institutional apparatus surrounding an Assembly can provide decision-makers and public managers with the legitimacy needed to enact potentially contentious policies and allows them to extend democratic processes beyond a 'politics as usual', engaging a wider set of voices than 'conventional' public participation processes (Sandover et al., 2021).

Identifying key stakeholders and building partnerships with civil society organisations and experts helps create a diverse and inclusive Assembly. Establishing clear guidelines for participant selection ensures a representative cross-section of the population is involved. Adequate time must be allocated for these preparatory stages, which can take several months to gather input and develop a comprehensive framework. The quality and legitimacy of a Citizens' Assembly is contingent upon these requirements and must demonstrate that an open and transparent process was undertaken free from undue influence interest groups or political interference (Farrell et al., 2019).

Beginning the Citizen Assembly process with a question-setting workshop with Barnet Council and key decision-makers in Borough catalysed a lengthy and deliberative process that set a strong, collaborative and open foundation for the entire project. Staff spent several months planning and designing the Assemblies under the direction of TPXImpact, with the question-setting workshop a major component of that. This led to a high-level action plan that was aided by the Expert Advisory and Oversight and Scrutiny Groups — an element that is considered 'best practice' in the formation and implementation of Assemblies (Kuntze and Fesenfeld, 2021).

The project planning and implementation happened very swiftly, with a tender committed and an external supplier chosen within a matter of a few months.

The first assembly session started with an understanding of the key parameters and observations on participation and engagement, with the first presentations intended to set foundations about absorbing, learning and processing information about climate change and the risks that it posed both globally and locally. A challenge that was identified early on was having enough time for participants to absorb the knowledge being shared through expert presentations, and to have enough time to

adequately plan, timetable and book appropriate speakers. The project was on a tight timeline, and lessons were being learned along the way.

Accountability and Transparency

Establishing transparency and implementing strategic communication throughout the various stages of the Citizens' Assembly, including the recruitment process, is essential for cultivating trust in the CA process. To achieve this, the Assembly must receive a clear mandate from the government and be adequately resourced. Adequate time and financial resources should be allocated to ensure comprehensive and effective communication throughout the entire process (Wells et al., 2021).

From early on, the public was kept abreast of the recruitment process and participants noted that they felt that the process was clear, transparent and trustworthy.

Process issues such as what information was shared and by whom, the number of people involved, and the efficacy of the recruitment effort were named as positive inputs into the process.

The Council maintained a comprehensive and actively updated website through the process and reported their activities back to stakeholders through public documents, meetings and internal processes.

The Assistant Director for Sustainability, Yogita Popat, was specifically mentioned as a trustworthy and competent source of information, and her continuous presence at the Assemblies led participants to feel that the project was being run smoothly. In particular, her interventions at the beginning of several sessions, utilising a 'You Said We Did' approach made the presentations very relevant to participants. Careful language reminding them what they had requested, and linking back actions to those requests, set a standard of trust and accountability early on in the process.

Political Championing and Support

Along with ensuring transparency throughout the process, providing regular updates to the public and engaging with media outlets to disseminate information, political will is crucial to garner support from relevant decision-makers, who should demonstrate commitment to act on the Assembly's recommendations. If policies are formulated without public engagement and support, it can undermine the legitimacy of formal climate policy decisions and potentially lead to public resistance (Wells et al., 2021).

The Sustainability Team included relevant stakeholders, including politicians, at every stage of the process, and embedded them as 'enablers, convenors, influencers and connectors' integral to the process.

Whilst key decision-makers were often not in the room during the Assembly (a strategic decision designed to encourage participants to speak freely and not be overwhelmed by political priorities), it was noted by some participants that a panel with Senior Council Officers was appreciated and well attended. What was particularly appreciated by participants was the inclusion of political actors at the end stages of the process, and that they acted in a listening capacity rather than participating. It was remarked by one participant that there is a greater expectation on them to act now, and to be accountable, as a result of their presence at the Assembly.

Resources and Personnel

It is crucial that a Citizens' Assembly is both strategic, transparent and follows processes and procedures designed to be as inclusive as possible and that it receives a strong mandate from the government, but even more important is that it is properly resourced with ample time, funding and administrative support (Wells et al., 2021).

As most local authorities lack extensive budgets to fund such an endeavour, it is especially important to deliver projects in a cost-effective yet comprehensive way. Given the cost and time required to implement them properly, they must have clear leadership and a commitment to input, throughput and output (Devaney et al., 2020).

For Barnet's Sustainability Team to be successful, a 'Change Agent' was needed to spearhead the endeavour — someone to remove barriers within the bureaucracy, build on internal and external relationships through networking, recruit and retain the right people with the appropriate skill sets, and enable them to achieve the overall vision of the department. This role was ably occupied by Yogita Popat and her team of other professional leaders who fully embodied the principles of 'creative autonomy and an agile mindset' when undertaking the project.

The team were under-prepared, however, for the size and scale of the project, especially within the time constraints given. With no playbook or manual for reference, the team were at times overwhelmed, which at times resulted in confusion over responsibility for execution between in-house teams and the external supplier.

In retrospect, it is clear that at minimum an FTE is required for at least six months to plan and implement a Citizens' Assembly with the continued assistance of a leadership team, along with clearly delineated parameters set out for working with the external supplier.

Depending on the size and scale of a Citizens' Assembly, experts estimate that it could cost anywhere from £50,000-£450,000 (Sandover et al., 2021). It is our understanding that the budget for the Citizens' Assembly was £80,000 with the cost of the Youth Assembly another £30,000. We consider this extraordinarily good value for money given the extent of the remit and the outcomes stemming from it and when comparing that budget to those examined in the literature.

Recommendations

1. **Allocate sufficient time, resources and personnel for successful implementation of the Citizens' Assembly.**

Rationale: Proper resourcing is critical for the success of Citizens' Assemblies. This includes funding and administrative support, as well as having a dedicated and competent team leading the endeavor – before, during and afterward. For future assemblies, the leadership team should have a clear understanding of the project's scope and requirements, along with a well-defined strategy for working with external suppliers. It is recommended to have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff for a minimum of six months to plan and implement another Citizens' Assembly effectively.

2. **Continue to be open and transparent about the ongoing process.**

Rationale: Transparency and accountability are crucial for building trust and legitimacy in the Citizens' Assembly process. The Assembly should continue to receive a clear mandate from the administration and be adequately resourced. This includes allocating sufficient time and financial resources for effective communication and reporting back to the public and relevant decision-makers.

3. **Maintain political visibility.**

Rationale: Political support is vital to ensure that the Assembly's recommendations are taken seriously and acted upon. Continued engagement with decision-makers after the process, including having panels with senior council officers, linking key policy decisions and speeches, as well as consistent constituent correspondence to the recommendations, can demonstrate ongoing commitment to the process.

Participant Experience

Diversity and Representation

A lack of trust in government often results from a lack of representation, or the perceived imbalance of power being granted to 'corrupt elites' that exclude a broad range of citizens in the policy-making process (Kuntze and Fesenfeld, 2021).

Ensuring that participants in a Citizens' Assembly represent a diverse range of citizens in terms of age, background, demographics, and viewpoints is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, such diversity fosters a more inclusive and representative decision-making process, allowing a broader spectrum of voices to be heard and considered. This inclusivity enhances the legitimacy of the Assembly's outcomes, as decisions are grounded in the collective wisdom and experiences of a cross-section of society. Additionally, diverse perspectives enable participants to learn from one another, gaining insights into different lived realities and challenges related to the issue at hand. This exposure encourages empathy, understanding, and the potential for consensus-building among participants, ultimately leading to more informed and well-rounded policy recommendations. The process by which local authorities recruit from a diverse participant base allows for greater access to citizen voices (Willis et al., 2022).

By actively engaging citizens from various walks of life, Citizens' Assemblies become powerful instruments for democratic participation and social cohesion, ensuring that the resulting decisions reflect the true needs and aspirations of the community they represent.

A key pillar in the BarNET ZERO Campaign, 'For the Community by the Community' served as a useful and accessible stance from which to recruit a diverse range of participants. The call-to-action framed around 'joining us on the journey' helped to position the Council as a collaborator and co-creator rather than a top-down manager of the endeavour. This also allowed community groups, early on in the process, to take greater ownership of the programme through participating in storytelling via online videos, User Generated Content (UGC) and sharing insights through social media.

The recruitment process was fair and effective, with 8,000 invitations issued throughout the community and complemented by a series of outreach tools designed to reach a broad swath of the community.

The diversity and representation of the participant group were noted as a positive aspect of the programme; however, focus group participants (n=2) suggested that perhaps another layer of screening was needed to ensure that attendees had the right motivation for attending, as some might have been more focused on the financial compensation received, rather than engaging fully with the process. However, a risk in not providing financial compensation is that it tends to appeal

mainly to participants who are already deeply engaged with the topic – this was another concern highlighted by participants. This was very frustrating for a small minority, who requested in the focus group that future engagements might utilise a system of qualifying questions, an interview or a phone call before acceptance on the programme.

Some focus group participants noted that all of the attendees tended towards ‘pro-green’ stances on the environment and climate change and that while this resulted in high motivation on behalf of participants to find sustainable solutions for Barnet, it did not adequately take into consideration the position of those who might consider themselves climate change deniers or not committed to sustainability goals. However, it was recognised that this might have been as a result of inclusion-bias and that those potential participants would not have wanted to engage in such an endeavour, therefore adding little to the process.

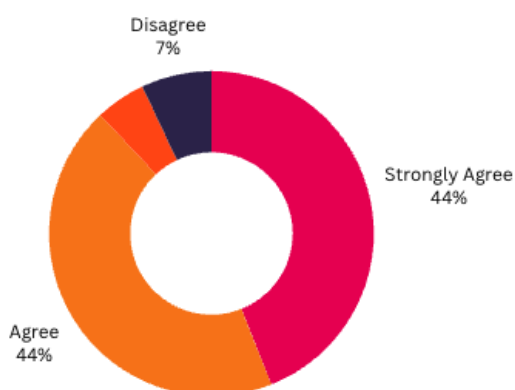
We do note that the team did utilise best practices in their recruitment programme, engaging Sortition Foundation – an industry leader – in the process. This included telephone interviews with participants during the onboarding process, and including fair attitudinal questions as part of the vetting process. It is also worth noting that the views expressed by a very small number of focus group participants may not necessarily reflect those of the majority of participants. The data from surveys below demonstrates a more fulsome picture of the overall views of the Assembly.

Participant on the 22nd of April: *“I think some age ranges are missing between people.”*

Participant on the 21st of May: *“[...] I think we were a fair representation but there were very few who were negative on climate change and these people views were not properly represented or visible.”*

Q13: I think that the participants of the Assembly represent the whole population of the Borough of Barnet.

In the session on **February 21st**, we conducted the first of three questionnaires with the Assembly members.

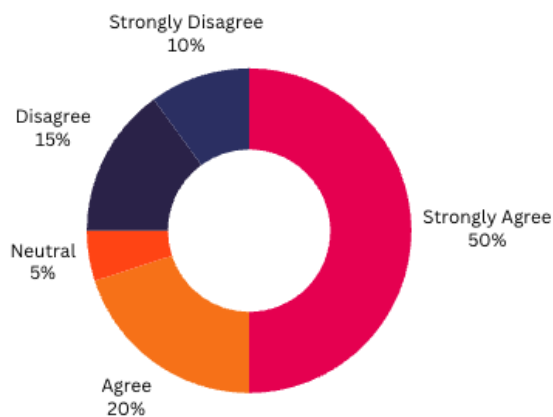
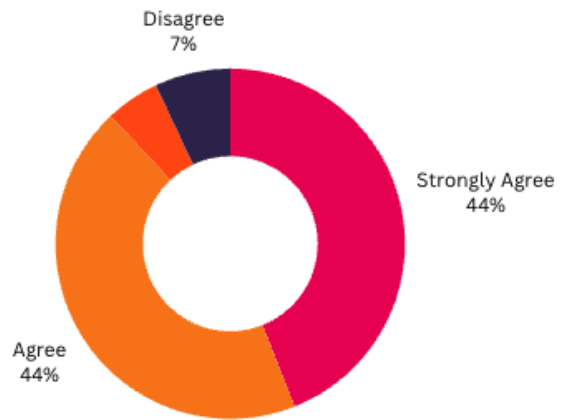


The graph reveals that nearly a quarter of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement, expressing their belief that the Assembly did not adequately represent the entire population.

While slightly over half of the respondents agreed that the representation was fair, 31% remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

The second questionnaire was conducted approximately halfway through the Citizen's Assembly on the **22nd of April**. From the graph, it is evident that a significant shift occurred in respondents' attitudes, with the majority now expressing positive responses, resulting in a total of 88% in agreement.

Both disagreements and neutral responses notably decreased, indicating that participants felt a stronger sense of inclusivity and diversity within the group.



The last questionnaire administered on **21st of May** reveals that a significant majority of respondents still agree that the assembly is diverse and provides a fair representation of Barnet's population.

However, the number of neutral and strongly disagreeing responses has slightly increased, accounting for one-third of all the respondents.

The quality of engagement, interaction, and participation in Citizens' Assemblies plays a pivotal role in driving more effective outcomes and creating a positive experience for participants. By employing inclusive and interactive formats, such as small group discussions, facilitated dialogues, and deliberative exercises, Citizens' Assemblies can ensure that diverse voices are heard and valued. These formats provide ample opportunities for individuals to express their viewpoints, ask questions, and engage in respectful debates, fostering an environment where all participants feel encouraged to contribute. It has been argued that these types of deliberative tools assist in increasing engagement, and bridge the gap between scientific, political and social actors, building trust and increasing the democratic legitimacy of climate policies by creating more citizen-centred policymaking (Howarth et al. 2021; Devaney et al. 2020; Capstick et al., 2020).

Additionally, employing tools like anonymous voting or visual aids can help create a comfortable and non-threatening space for learning and exchanging ideas, particularly for those who might feel hesitant to speak up in larger gatherings. As a result, the diverse array of perspectives brought forth during the Citizens' Assembly enriches the decision-making process, yielding more comprehensive and well-informed policy recommendations that resonate with the broader community and lead to positive, sustainable outcomes.

The guidelines given to participants before their deliberations (listen to each other, agree to disagree, respect each other's opinions) were appreciated by the attendees and embedded in their interactions. Participants appreciated the open-ended nature of the questions being asked, and the focus on enquiry. They felt that if the Council had been more prescriptive in its approach, people would have been less engaged and it would have lost the ethos of being a true Citizens' Assembly. They appreciated that the content was recapped and summarized at each session - this primed conversation and ensured everyone in attendance was roughly at the same starting point.

Participants felt that everyone agreed about main themes, such as Net Zero targets — everyone was on the same page in that regard, which allowed for conversation to flow more easily. A small minority of people were resistant to change — some reported that there were times when other participants were 'hot tempered' or 'delicate' when faced with practical solutions to challenges they raised.

Breaking down the numbers into groups of five made the interactions more manageable and moving around tables in the last two sessions allowed for mixing with different people and hear different ideas, which contributed to greater sharing.

Participants appreciated the ability to choose the topics they could speak to, which allowed for broader reach in some cases — mostly it was by allocation, but sometimes it was by interest. Additionally, participants agreed that breaking down the sessions with different activities each time, helped the group maintain focus, engagement and energy levels high.

Not everyone interacted — participants estimated they were given the opportunity to engage with about half of the total cohort. Whilst overall the group felt cohesive and there was some bonding that occurred, the way it was organised meant that not everyone met everyone else.

Overall, participants indicated that the quality of interaction throughout the assemblies was good. They felt listened to and they listened to what other members said.

At Citizens' Assembly sessions: 21st February, 22nd March and 21st May 2023, participants were given surveys to fill out at the end of each session.

Some highlights:

The first session had a high average score of 4.37, and this score followed a similar pattern with the second survey section scoring 4.33 and the last a 4.4 (Image 11), indicating the guidelines of "listen to each other, agree to disagree, respect each other's opinions" where implemented successfully since participants felt that they were able to say what they needed to and be respected for varying opinions. Participants remarked having "ample opportunities to put forward by opinions and views" as well as feeling the environment is "collaborative, informative [and]

Friendly”. Participants did mention some difficulties “wordsmithing” in groups or how effective a group discussion would be “Depend[ing] on the expertise of the mediator/facility member in the team.”

As indicated, the guidelines presented at the outset of the Assembly were well-received and appreciated by the participants. Nearly all the participants felt that the group genuinely respected diverse opinions.

Despite a small portion of the respondents feeling that agreements within the groups were not always met, more than half of the participants believed that the group was successfully reaching agreements to make decisions.

The number of participants showing a healthy opposing dialogue when necessary has grown over the three sessions, with February averaging at 3.37, April 3.80 and in May 4.10 (Image 11). This indicates a sense of comfort and safety in being able to speak one's mind on issues that could be considered controversial, which in turn allows for the group members in conversations from varying perspectives, which can lead to better ideas and qualities of conversation. Whilst it was found that most everyone felt “inclusive” and a positive experience, a participant also noticed the need for the “elderly or less educated population” to be “listened and respected just a bit more around the table” or at least provided with more patience.

Teamwork plays a vital role in enabling groups to thrive and accomplish their goals more effectively and efficiently. A striking 80% of the respondents acknowledged that other participants brought attention to aspects that might have otherwise been overlooked. This finding highlights the immense value of collaboration and the diverse perspectives it brings to the table, contributing to better decision-making and overall success in achieving objectives.

As evidence of the legitimacy and improved outcome quality that a more inclusive Assembly can bring, an average of 60% of the respondents agreed, over a three-month period, that collaborating with others was beneficial in gaining different perspectives.

Participants' attitudes evolved during three surveys on February 21st, April 22nd, and May 21st, 2023. Some were initially optimistic about change, while others expressed dissatisfaction with the assembly's organisation. Later, the majority of attendees regarded the assembly to be educational and outstanding, however, reservations about knowledge levels and facilitators remained. Whilst some concerns remained, including the implementation of the Assembly and concerns regarding representation and varied viewpoints, participants ultimately considered the assembly a success for voicing perspectives on environmental development.

Interestingly, it is worth noting that the average responses remained consistent for the first three questions. This indicates that participants felt they could freely express their opinions, and the groups demonstrated a respectful and attentive approach towards the diverse viewpoints of their members. This stability in average answers

underscores the positive dynamics within the groups and their willingness to engage in open and respectful discussions throughout the Assembly.

The presentations given by external experts were used as a conversation prompt, with 10-15min after the presentation dedicated to integration and reflection on key ideas. Sometimes the prompts were unrelated to climate change directly, which allowed participants to reflect on other aspects of their lives (i.e. major changes occurring in society or in their personal situation) which allowed them to draw parallels and make connections to the task at hand. This is an effective practice that supported a deeper and more meaningful engagement. However, some participants felt that the education process at the beginning of the programme lacked in-person engagement — participants would have preferred to have the materials sent to them for review beforehand so that they were primed for the presentations and the conversations that followed. Whilst there was a great deal of information available on the micro-site, and information was sent by post to those participants who lacked digital access, a more direct method of ensuring the participants had access to the materials might have been gratefully received by some participants.

It's unlikely that many of the online resources were reviewed due to the sheer volume of information and competing schedules. Participants would have preferred the content to be emailed to them directly (utilizing a push vs. pull method of delivery) to make the materials more actively accessible.

With regard to the final recommendations, there was a palpable feeling of momentum behind the presentations; demonstrating a participatory, integrated and responsible mindset on behalf of participants. Presenters were prepared, serious and confident in their delivery of the key recommendations. Although some admitted to being nervous, it was clear that they felt included and fully engaged in the process.

Other tactics that contributed to the sense of gravitas, momentum and closure on the final day — voting ballots, PPT slides shared in participant presentations, lists of recommendations developed in real time, and a professional illustrator capturing key ideas in a visually appealing way.

Parkinson (2004 p. 385) notes that sometimes participants in citizen assemblies make 'recommendations that are within quite narrow boundaries that are determined by levels of power to which [they] do not have access.' This underscores the importance of informing participants about the scale and scope of projects that fall within the local remit, and the level at which their recommendations can be implemented (Devaney et al., 2020).

Some participants expressed concern about specific areas within the recommendations, such as weekly food waste collection and water fountains in the town centre, worrying that these issues would not be tackled due to their exclusion from the key recommendations list. Others expressed some continued confusion about the remit of Barnet Borough Council and whether or not identified actions were

achievable given the scale and scope of the issue and the limited resources available.

Facilitation

The importance of strong and capable facilitation in Citizen Assemblies cannot be overstated. Facilitators play a critical role in creating a conducive environment for constructive dialogue, ensuring equitable participation, and guiding the Assembly towards efficient and effective outcomes. When considering the balance between hiring professional facilitators from external organisations and building capacity among local internal employees, both options have their advantages and pitfalls. Hiring external facilitators with specialised training can bring impartiality, expertise in participatory methods, and an outsider's perspective to avoid biases. However, it may come at a higher cost and facilitators might not fully understand the local context. On the other hand, training internal employees allows for a deeper understanding of local dynamics and ensures a lasting legacy of facilitation expertise but might require more time and resources to build the necessary skills. Some studies on Citizen Assemblies have indicated that participants prefer to work with external, professionally-trained Facilitators, along with other experts on the process, so that the process is guided and managed in a more structured way that focuses on outcomes rather than strictly on their inputs (Devaney et al., 2020).

A competent professional facilitator can employ various techniques to guide discussions, promote inclusion, and encourage efficient engagement. They can set ground rules for respectful communication, manage time effectively, and ensure that all participants have equal opportunities to express their views. Using active listening and paraphrasing, facilitators validate participants' contributions, fostering an atmosphere of trust and openness. By skilfully navigating potential conflicts and power imbalances, a competent facilitator creates a safe space where all voices are heard, valued, and considered in the decision-making process. Their expertise in managing group dynamics ensures that the Assembly's discussions stay on track, leading to well-informed and meaningful outcomes that reflect the collective wisdom of the participants and contribute to the success of the project.

Due to cost factors, the team at Barnet Council opted to train in-house facilitators and build capacity amongst the wider team, rather than hiring external professionally trained facilitators through TPX. This proved to be a challenge for participants, who reported that the quality of the facilitation varied. Overall, they were respectful of people's views, but some facilitators were more experienced in leading conversation and ensuring all participant voices were heard.

Discussion amongst participants under the guided direction of professional facilitators tends to enable participants to consolidate their knowledge and collaborate more effectively in generating ideas for action (Willis et al., 2022).

The participants felt that they tended to take a back seat to facilitators, and that more soft skill development in facilitator training was needed. Participants requested that

stronger facilitators, experienced and trained in the process, would have been a welcome addition. Specifically, the impression was that they were not professional facilitators and worked for Barnet Council and were thus biased or ineffective. This would have a negative impact on the perceived legitimacy of the Citizens' Assembly. They were apt at ensuring respect and inclusion but were not effective at keeping conversations on track and using the time effectively. It might have been a good staff development opportunity and capacity-building exercise for these employees to observe the sessions but not take an active role in facilitation without more training. This is a lesson for future Citizen Assemblies - it might be best to blend a team between those who are professionally trained and those who work internally with minimal training going forward.

Recommendations

- 1. Enhance the already robust recruitment process for Citizens' Assembly participants to ensure a diverse range of perspectives, including sceptical voices on climate change.**

Rationale: While the diversity and representation of participants have been positively acknowledged, it is essential to address potential biases and ensure broader inclusion of viewpoints. To achieve this, consider implementing an additional screening layer in the recruitment process. Furthermore, actively reach out to include individuals who hold different stances on climate change, including climate change deniers or those not committed to sustainability goals. Address any potential inclusion biases to create a more inclusive and representative participant group. By including a diverse range of perspectives, the Citizens' Assembly can foster meaningful dialogue, empathy, and ultimately lead to more comprehensive and informed policy recommendations that reflect the true needs and concerns of the entire community.

- 2. Implement a streamlined and direct email delivery system for online resources to enhance accessibility and increase participants' engagement.**

Rationale: The current approach of relying on online resources without a direct delivery method may result in participants not accessing or reviewing the materials fully. The sheer volume of information and competing schedules can be overwhelming, leading to reduced engagement. By adopting a push delivery method via email, participants will receive the content directly, making it more actively accessible. This approach ensures that participants are informed about new resources and can access them conveniently at their own pace. A streamlined and direct email delivery system will increase the likelihood of participants engaging with the materials, resulting in a more informed and productive Citizens' Assembly process.

- 3. Strengthen the facilitator training program by incorporating soft skills development and consider a blended team approach for future Citizens' Assemblies.**

Rationale: Participants in the Barnet Council's Citizens' Assembly highlighted the varying quality of facilitation as a challenge. To address this, the facilitator training program should focus on developing softer skills to ensure effective guidance and active participation from all attendees. Additionally, the use of a blended team, with a mix of trained facilitators and staff from Barnet Council, could be considered. This approach allows staff members to observe and learn during the sessions while not taking an active role in facilitation without adequate training. By improving facilitation quality and ensuring a balanced team, participants will have a more constructive and collaborative experience, leading to better-informed policy recommendations and enhancing the perceived legitimacy of future Citizens' Assemblies.

Communication and Further Engagement

Post-Assembly Actions and Follow-up

The experience of actively participating in the Assembly enhances citizens' sense of civic responsibility and empowerment, promoting long-term engagement with democratic processes and fostering a culture of collaboration and trust within the community. There is an imperative for assembly organisers to utilise the momentum they generate by not only engaging participants in further climate change debates, but to also engage the wider public to extend legitimacy in the project and promote further education and engagement (Wells et al., 2021).

Measuring the efficacy of the Citizen Assembly must take into consideration whether or not citizens have an opportunity to discuss ideas and recommendations with other citizens and officials, and whether decision-makers are willing to listen and take on board the results of the deliberative process (Svara and Denhardt, 2010).

While longitudinal research into the post-assembly engagement was beyond the scope of this project, early findings indicate that participants were keen and willing to continue active engagement in the process. Specifically, participants wanted the option of attending regular meetings, potentially acting as 'eyes in the community' that could continue to report back to Council.

Further, some participants were concerned about the regularity of future correspondence, suggesting the creation of a Whatsapp group for the Assembly to keep them updated on the status of the recommendations. In general, they requested that more be done to prioritise bottom-up engagement, but also recognised that the community needs to be more proactive taking up the recommendations without waiting for the council to enact and communicate all elements of the plan.

Some participants expressed frustration that there wasn't ample room for debate or conversation after the ten recommendations were finalised. It was unclear about which of the recommendations were actually realistic, and participants would have preferred to have a more in-depth discussion with the council regarding the feasibility of the recommendations.

Further, there was some concern expressed that the recommendations were left hanging in mid-air, or left to disappear into a 'black hole they go into' as one focus group participant remarked.

Communications Activity

Strategic communications activity is essential to increase exposure for the Citizen Assembly process and foster continuous engagement. A low-level of awareness about Citizen Assemblies can negatively affect outcomes as it undermines the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of the project (Wells et al., 2021).

Effective communication ensures that citizens are well-informed about the Assembly's objectives, progress, and outcomes, encouraging broader participation and buy-in from the community. With adequate public engagement through various communication channels, Citizens' Assemblies can act as 'trusted information proxies' with the aim of creating a continuous dialogue with the public, ensuring more proactive engagement with new forms of environmental citizenship (Mackenzie and Warren, 2012).

The first task of the Campaigns Manager for Sustainability was to design a communications brief — looking for 'cut through', something different than the ordinary green/blue standard visual identity used in most environmental campaigns. The colours red and black were identified as conveying emergency (to align with the Borough's declaration of a Climate Emergency in May 2022) and the campaign moniker 'BarNET ZERO' acted as a crucial background campaign from which to launch the Citizen's Assemblies and encouraged a closer working relationship with key stakeholder and community groups.

The distribution of 9 short videos with 40-50 local citizens in front of the camera resulted in 150K views on the videos and 5K web visits — which are very positive results for a low-budget campaign of less than £1,000. The campaign was further picked up by the national press, the Local Government Association, and London Councils, adding to its reach and legitimacy. Launched in January, the BarNET ZERO Campaign acted as a message springboard for the launch of the Citizen's Assembly, enhancing awareness, amplifying its credibility and making a strong statement about the seriousness with which the council was implementing its sustainability action plans.

The team was pleasantly surprised at how many people in the community were ready and willing to be involved in the project. There were several community groups already working actively in the space (there are at least 70 environmental groups operating in the Borough), and the team quickly understood that their role was to curate and amplify their stories, which would raise the profile of the project overall. The communications team actively listened to their stories and then worked with them to integrate them into the broader campaign. This meant that public engagement was already relatively high when the Citizen's Assemblies began. The challenge would be to maintain this momentum, keeping the program top of mind for citizens both during and after it had finished.

The team used cost-effective approaches to achieve this, utilising various communication channels, such as social media, local out-of-home advertising space and videos to reach a diverse audience.

Public engagement beyond the formal process of the Citizens' Assembly through media coverage and follow-up events can contribute to a deeper integration of the process and recommendations into the public's consciousness and can provide a means by which decision-makers working on climate change can be held more directly to account on the recommendations made (Devaney et al., 2020; Capstick et al., 2020).

The launch of the recommendations to coincide with London Climate Action Week (29 June), coupled with a solid post-Assembly communications strategy (including 'commandeering' all the local advertising billboards in the Borough featuring a call to action and highlighting the 10 key recommendations), garnered strong attention with the use of visual tools, videos, an interactive flip-book document and the professional illustrations from the events, with over 1,000 clicks in the first 3 days.

Further initiatives, including the 'Task and Finish' Groups managed by participants to become 'green champions' of the Borough, and the use of mini-docuseries and Tik Tok videos created by the Young People Assembly participants, are in the process of being planned and complement an already rigorous communications and outreach programme post-Assembly.

Some other ideas might include developing a more public-facing role for participants, potentially acting as spokespeople in media, appearing on podcasts, leading public hearings and taking an active role in future Council-led initiatives (King and Wilson, 2023).

Social Media Analysis

As a low-cost, potentially high-impact outreach channel, it is important to consider the maximal use of digital technologies and platforms and developing them in parallel with Assembly actions. This allows the team to scaffold and augment deliberative engagements and improve relationships through a more direct and personal approach (King and Wilson, 2023).

A brief analysis of the Council's social media activity during the Citizens' Assembly follows.

Instagram. On Instagram, the Council has shared a total of 25 posts related to the Citizens' Assembly since January. However, in the initial phase of the campaign until the Assembly's start in February, there were only 2 related posts. These posts were informative, inviting the audience to sign up and explaining the Assembly's purpose,

encouraging them to follow the citizens' recommendations through online Zoom sessions.

From February to April, the content became repetitive, focusing on inviting residents to join the 'Show and Share' online event to stay informed about the Citizens' Assembly. During Earth Day in April, 8 additional posts were shared, featuring a young participant discussing sustainability lessons learned during the Assembly. The Council launched an e-bulletin, a new initiative to promote sustainability news and opportunities, as part of the BarNET Zero campaign.

Between April and May, there was a gap in official posts related to the Citizens' Assembly from the Borough. The Council reappeared in June for the 'Great Big Green Week,' sponsoring posts about the Young People's Assembly's recommendations on sustainability and biodiversity and participating in the national Letters to Tomorrow initiative. Despite these trending topics, the posts received minimal engagement, with only 9 likes.

In July, the Council got back on track by sharing a series of 6 themed posts presenting the big 10 recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly. They also launched Discover & Win, a prize-draw to engage the audience.

It's worth noting that some of the hyperlinks on the posts did not work, and audience comments were not replied to. Overall, the content posted was repetitive and didn't bring any new information regarding the Citizen's Assembly. Despite inviting citizens taking part in a free giveaways contest in July, the engagement was relatively low, with an average of 2 likes per post. Addressing these issues could potentially improve engagement and interaction on Instagram.

Twitter. Over a 6-month period, the Council shared 34 tweets related to the Citizen's Assembly and the Young People's Assembly on Twitter. These tweets achieved an average of 4.79 likes, 0.37 comments, and 1,228.65 impressions. Notably, tweets featuring videos or pictures received the highest views and retweets.

One particular tweet that garnered significant engagement was the launch of the first Citizens' Assembly session on achieving a net-zero borough by 2042, with 9 retweets, 13 likes, and 1,710 impressions. Similarly, the tweet announcing the launch of the first Youth Assembly on climate change received 2 comments, 13 retweets, 23 likes, and 2,250 impressions.

Throughout the campaign, the Council effectively used the hashtag #BarNETZERO, widely promoting their Net Zero campaign. They also utilized relevant hashtags like #ClimateChange, #ClimateAction, #CitizenAssembly, #mysaymatters, #InvestInOurPlanet, #Sustainability, #LetterstoTomorrow, #SustainableHousing, and #RenewableEnergy. Additional hashtags like #EarthDay, #GreatBigGreenWeek, #LettersToTomorrow, #PlasticFreeJuly, and #LCAW2023 were employed to support and promote relevant initiatives and events, further enhancing visibility and engagement on social media.

However, despite a limited number of tweets announcing the start of the Assemblies, the Council's repetitive strategy of inviting the audience to join online sessions for updates on the residents' work in the Assembly proved to be ineffective. The engagement per tweet averaged at 1%, and in July, tweets regarding the outcomes of the Citizen's Assembly gained less than 1% engagement rate.

LinkedIn. On LinkedIn, Barnet Council's engagement regarding the Citizens' Assembly was relatively limited, with a greater focus on sharing content related to the BarNet ZERO campaign. Notably, most content about the Citizens' Assembly came from Yogita Popat, which differed from the approach on other social media platforms.

Analysing posts related to the #BarNetZero campaign, four content themes were identified:

- **Evidence of People Involved:** Posts showcasing individuals working or involved in Barnet's Citizens' Assembly, demonstrating citizens' active involvement in the campaign. These are mainly reposting of the Assembly's participants and the images attached are of a low quality, showcasing the PowerPoint slides used during the Assembly.
- **Sharing the Assembly Process:** Posts discussing the progress and process of the Citizens' Assembly received the highest likes and comments, making the project more personable and raising awareness about its ongoing activities.
- **Awards:** Yogita's and Sunita's posts announcing their shortlisting for the Public Sector Campaign of the Year award generated significant engagement. Yogita's post directed attention towards the campaign's credibility and potential impact on other boroughs.
- **Posts from Barnet Council:** The council itself did not extensively promote the Citizens' Assembly, but a comment from Rohit Grover demonstrated positive influence, creating awareness and fostering conversations.
 - *I can't join this Show and Share session but #BarNETZERO has been a terrific campaign and an example of where the private sector can learn best practice from the public sector.*

Posts received varying levels of engagement, with likes ranging from 5 to 100 and comments from 0 to 14. However, the Council's use of repetitive, low-quality images should be avoided in future, considering the prominence of the Council.

Overall, LinkedIn engagement on the Citizens' Assembly could benefit from more varied and compelling content that aligns with the campaign's objectives, fostering deeper connections and conversations among the audience.

Suggestions

Effectively utilizing social media is a continuous effort that demands constant attention and knowledge. To strengthen their online presence on matters relating both to the Citizens Assembly as well as the overall sustainability narrative, Barnet Council can make some small but impactful improvements:

1. **Cohesive Visual Identity:** Building a consistent visual identity across all campaigns with personalised colours, images, and tone of voice will enhance recognition and relatability.
2. **Avoid Over-posting and Engage Responsively:** To avoid spamming and repetition, it's essential to post thoughtfully and in moderation, especially on Twitter. Engaging with followers by replying to comments fosters stronger connections.
3. **Tailor Content for Each Platform:** Adapting content to suit each platform's audience increases resonance. Engage with stakeholders on LinkedIn, share breaking news on Twitter, and create engaging content on Instagram.
4. **High-Quality Images for Enhanced Authority:** Refrain from using low-quality images, particularly in Barnet Council's posts, to reinforce visual identity and boost profile credibility.
5. **Strategic Use of Hashtags:** consistently track the number of hashtags used weekly to maintain a balanced approach and avoid excessive use. Craft short, memorable, and unique hashtags aligned with each campaign's core message or call to action. Leveraging trending hashtags, particularly those related to cause-related events, such as #EarthDay, can significantly increase brand awareness and interactions - key hashtags to consider include #BarNetZERO for the overall campaign and possibly #CitizenAssembly to differentiate specific initiatives while still linking them to the broader BarNET ZERO campaign.

By implementing these adjustments, Barnet Council can elevate its social media presence, increase engagement, and effectively connect with its audience across various platforms.

Recommendations

1. **Foster long-term engagement and transparency by facilitating ongoing dialogue and communication with Citizens' Assembly participants and the wider community.**

Rationale: Actively participating in the Citizens' Assembly enhances citizens' sense of civic responsibility and empowerment, leading to increased engagement with democratic processes. To capitalize on this momentum, it is imperative to continue engaging participants in further climate change debates and involve the wider public to extend legitimacy and promote education. To measure the efficacy of the Assembly, opportunities for citizens to discuss ideas and recommendations with each other and decision-makers should be provided. Early findings indicate that participants are willing to remain actively engaged and provide valuable feedback. To address their concerns, create avenues for regular meetings, such as a Whatsapp group, to keep participants updated on recommendation status. Additionally, allow space for in-depth discussions with the Council on the feasibility of recommendations and ensure transparency in the follow-up process to avoid the perception of recommendations being disregarded. Prioritizing bottom-up engagement and empowering the community to take up recommendations independently will foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and sustained commitment to addressing climate change issues in the Borough.

2. **Strengthen and expand the strategic communications and public engagement efforts to maintain momentum and foster continuous community engagement beyond the Citizen's Assemblies.**

Rationale: Effective strategic communication is essential for increasing exposure and awareness of the Citizen Assembly process, ensuring transparency, legitimacy, and public buy-in. To maintain the high level of engagement observed during the project, a robust post-Assembly communications strategy should be implemented. Utilize cost-effective approaches, such as social media, local advertising space, and videos, to reach a diverse audience and amplify the project's credibility. Leveraging the success of the BarNET Zero Campaign and showcasing community stories can further raise the profile of the project and deepen integration into the public's consciousness. Encourage participants to become 'green champions' of the Borough, playing a public-facing role as spokespeople in media, podcasts, and public hearings, enhancing community involvement and trust. Implementing these initiatives will ensure a continuous and proactive dialogue with the public, promoting new forms of environmental citizenship and creating a lasting impact on climate action within the community.

- 3. Strengthen Barnet Council's social media presence by implementing small but impactful improvements, including creating a cohesive visual identity, posting thoughtfully and in moderation, tailoring content for each platform, using high-quality images for enhanced authority, and strategically utilizing hashtags for increased brand awareness and interactions.**

Rationale: Effectively utilizing social media requires continuous attention and knowledge. By building a consistent visual identity with personalized colours, images, and tone of voice, the Council can enhance recognition and relatability. Thoughtful and moderated posting, along with engaging responsively with followers, fosters stronger connections and avoids spamming. Adapting content to suit each platform's audience increases resonance and engagement. Using high-quality images reinforces visual identity and boosts profile credibility. Strategically using hashtags aligned with each campaign's core message or call to action, and leveraging trending hashtags, can significantly increase brand awareness and interactions. These adjustments will elevate Barnet Council's social media presence, increase engagement, and effectively connect with its audience across various platforms.

Conclusions

Developing a Citizens Assembly requires careful planning, commitment, and collaboration. By focusing on the following areas, the Council can continue to foster democratic decision-making and drive meaningful outcomes that align with the community's aspirations.

Recommendations

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The Council should enhance their Citizens' Assembly processes by focusing on comprehensive planning, transparency, political engagement, and resource allocation. A well-structured planning process aligned with community needs and priorities, inclusive stakeholder partnerships, and adequate preparatory time are crucial. Transparency should be emphasized through clear mandates, adequate resources, and regular public updates. Engaging decision-makers and political actors throughout the process in a listening capacity can foster commitment and accountability. Proper resourcing, including dedicated personnel and funding, is essential for effective implementation. By adopting these recommendations, the Council can improve the legitimacy and impact of their Citizens' Assemblies on climate change.

1. Allocate sufficient time, resources and personnel for successful implementation of the Citizens' Assembly.
2. Continue to be open and transparent about the ongoing process.
3. Maintain political visibility.

PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCE

The recruitment process should be strengthened to ensure a diverse range of participants, including those with different perspectives on climate change. By implementing additional screening layers, such as qualifying questions or interviews, and actively reaching out to include various viewpoints, the Assembly can foster a more meaningful dialogue among participants. Secondly, to increase participants' engagement with online resources, a streamlined and direct email delivery system should be implemented, making the materials more easily accessible. This will enable participants to be better informed and contribute more effectively to the Assembly's discussions. Lastly, to improve facilitation quality, the in-house facilitators should receive enhanced training, ensuring they have the skills to guide deliberation. Consideration should also be given to a blended team approach, combining trained facilitators and Council staff for a more effective and balanced facilitation process.

1. Enhance the recruitment process for Citizens' Assembly participants to ensure a diverse range of perspectives, including sceptical voices on climate change.
2. Implement a streamlined and direct email delivery system for online resources to enhance accessibility and increase participants' engagement.
3. Strengthen the facilitator training program by incorporating soft skills development and consider a blended team approach for future Citizens' Assemblies.

COMMUNICATION AND FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Social media has proven to be a powerful and cost-effective tool for the Council to reach and engage a large audience. Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, the Council has effectively disseminated educational information, raised brand awareness, and communicated with the local community. To further enhance their social media presence, the Council should implement a cohesive visual identity, avoid over-posting, tailor content for each platform, use high-quality images, and strategically employ relevant hashtags. When employed strategically and thoughtfully, social media offers Barnet Council an invaluable means to connect with its audience, foster brand loyalty, and keep citizens well-informed about the Council's initiatives and campaigns.

1. Foster long-term engagement and transparency by facilitating ongoing dialogue and communication with Citizens' Assembly participants and the wider community.
2. Strengthen and expand the strategic communications and public engagement efforts to maintain momentum and foster continuous community engagement beyond the Citizen's Assemblies.
3. Strengthen Barnet Council's social media presence by implementing small but impactful improvements, including creating a cohesive visual identity, posting thoughtfully and in moderation, tailoring content for each platform, using high-quality images for enhanced authority, and strategically utilizing hashtags for increased brand awareness and interactions.

This report highlights the significance of a well-structured and inclusive process in setting up Citizens' Assemblies on climate change in the Borough. We believe the process that the Council engaged in was comprehensive, thorough and representative. Further, it increased legitimacy on the part of the Borough in their pursuit of Net Zero goals. The Citizens' Assemblies proved to be a cost-effective, accountable and transparent process that set solid foundations in strengthening trust and commitment to the overall programme. By implementing these recommendations, the Council can elevate the effectiveness, inclusivity, and impact of their Citizens' Assemblies, fostering a culture of collaboration, trust, and environmental citizenship within the community.

References

- Capstick S. et al. 2020. Climate change citizens' assemblies. CAST Briefing Paper 03. Available at: [https:// cast.ac.uk/ wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CAST-Briefing-03-Climate-Change-Citizens- Assemblies.pdf](https://cast.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CAST-Briefing-03-Climate-Change-Citizens-Assemblies.pdf). [Accessed 21 July 2023]
- Devaney, L., Torney, D., Brereton, P., Coleman, M., 2020. Deepening public engagement on climate change: Lessons from the citizens' assembly. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Farrell, D., Curato, N., Dryzek, J.S., Geißel, B., Grönlund, K., Marien, S., Setälä, M. 2019. Deliberative mini-publics: Core design features (Working PaperNo.2019/5). Canberra: Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance.
- Howarth C., Barry, J. et al. 2021. Trends in local climate action in the UK. A report by the Place-Based Climate Action Network (PCAN). UK
- Isaacs, W. 1999. Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together, New York: Doubleday 1999, pp. 418-420.
- King, M., Wilson, R., 2023. Local government and democratic innovations: reflections on the case of citizen assemblies on climate change. Public Money & Management 43, 73–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2022.2033462>
- Kuntze, L., Fesenfeld, L.P., 2021. Citizen assemblies can enhance political feasibility of ambitious climate policies. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3918532>
- Mackenzie, M. and Warren, M., 2012. Two trust-based uses of mini-publics in democratic systems. In
- Parkinson, J. and Mansbridge, J. (eds), Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 95–124.
- Parkinson, J. 2004. Why deliberate? The encounter between deliberation and new public managers. Public Administration, 82, 377–395.
- Sandover, R., Moseley, A., Devine-Wright, P., 2021. Contrasting Views of Citizens' Assemblies:
- Stakeholder Perceptions of Public Deliberation on Climate Change. Politics and Governance 9, 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i2.4019>
- Svara JH, Denhardt J. 2010. Connected communities: local governments as a partner in citizen engagement and community building, White Paper for Alliance for Innovation. Arizona State University

Wells, R., Howarth, C., Brand-Correa, L.I., 2021. Are citizen juries and assemblies on climate change driving democratic climate policymaking? An exploration of two case studies in the UK. *Climatic Change* 168, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-021-03218-6>

Willis, R., Curato, N., Smith, G., 2022. Deliberative democracy and the climate crisis. *WIREs Climate Change* 13, e759. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.759>

APPENDIX

- Questionnaire
- Focus Group and Interview Guides
- Information on stored recordings and transcripts

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire: Evaluation of Citizens' Assembly and Young People's Assembly, Borough of Barnet, February-May 2023

Dear Assembly Participant,

On behalf of Barnet Council we, a group of academics and students of Middlesex University, are conducting an evaluation of the Citizens' and Young People's Assembly meetings in which you are participating. We will use the information that we collect to find out how the communication in the meetings went and how participants feel about their participation. We will write up our conclusions in a report for the Council which can be used in planning future Citizens' Assemblies and Young People's Assemblies. The report will also be made available to you. We would be very grateful if you would be willing to fill in this anonymous questionnaire.

Please circle the number that best describes your experience during the sessions, with "1" meaning "not at all" and "5" meaning "very much".

1. I am able to say what I think needs to be said.

1 2 3 4 5

2. As a group, we listen to what everyone has to say.

1 2 3 4 5

3. As a group, we respect that people have different opinions by not excluding anyone.

1 2 3 4 5

4. We spend time finding out the facts of the topics that we discuss.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I have sometimes given direction to the discussions we were having.

1 2 3 4 5

6. We sometimes reach agreement so that we can make a decision.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I have opposed opinions of others when necessary, so that we could make a better decision.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide: Follow-up interviews, Barnet Citizens' Assembly and Youth Assembly on Climate Action

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview about the climate action assemblies that you have participated in.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be deleted and the transcriptions will be anonymised. Interview transcriptions will be used in the completion of an evaluation report by Middlesex University London, commissioned by Barnet Council. Do you consent to being interviewed?

Yes/No

We are conducting an evaluation of the Assemblies that have taken place. We are particularly interested in the quality of the interaction during the Assembly meetings and in perceptions of participants and organisers about the effectiveness and impact of the assemblies. We are interested in understanding roles, behaviours and the way dialogue during the sessions unfolded. We will use our analysis of communication in the assembly meetings to formulate recommendations for future Assemblies.

This is an open-format interview. While we will ask questions, do feel free to raise any topic you feel is relevant.

Questions:

1. What was the initial thinking and planning of the process?
 - a. Do you have previous experiences with citizens' assemblies? What were your expectations for these assemblies?
2. How did you experience the interactions during the assembly meetings?
 - a. What methods did you use to support and encourage engagement?
 - b. How would you describe the interaction between participants? (interviewer: you may refer to the theoretical framework to probe/elicite examples).
3. What challenges did you experience in getting full participation?
 - a. Did you try to overcome these challenges? If so, how?
4. What do you think the impact of the assemblies will be on climate action in Barnet?
 - a. In terms of behaviour and attitudes of residents
 - b. In terms of policy and decision-making in Barnet Council
5. What lessons did you learn?
6. What would you do differently in future?
7. What are the early outcomes of the initiative?
 - a. What do you think the impact of the assemblies will be on climate action in Barnet?
8. Do you have any final observations about the assemblies and your participation in them?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us!

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION ON STORED DATA AND TRANSCRIPTS

The data collected for this project is stored on secure Middlesex University data servers and is only accessible to the Researchers.

Interview and focus group transcripts, survey responses and participant observation notes are in a physical folder on Middlesex University campus until April 2024.

All rights reserved

