



Update

It's several months since Merton Citizens was launched, and we thought it would be good to have an update of what's happened so far – and what will be happening soon.

And from all this info, please especially note the date of **Monday 16 Oct** for the next important gathering – 6.30pm at St Mark's Mitcham.

So far...

- Meeting in January attracted 60+, including several from our parish. We heard inspirational stories of Citizens in other Boroughs
- We raised £1000 from Holy Trinity congregation, with lots of £10 donations. We were delighted to have a large group of supporters for this project
- Meeting in May attracted 80+ people to launch the 'Listening Campaign' – hearing the issues that affect us and our communities. 14 people from our parish attended
- Merton Priory parish officially joined Merton Citizens, one of a dozen institutions to do so.
- Listening Campaign over the summer. In our parish we've engaged 150 people in this consultation – and more still to go. Over the Borough the number is thousands
- New organisations have joined Citizens over the summer, including Wimbledon College.
- Five people from our parish attended a two day training course in Waterloo, with 50 others – to learn about community organising

Stories about the training

Two of those who went on the training tell their stories here:

Sarah Dewhurst:

"So having put my hand up for a community leadership course I arrived on Friday with few expectations and a lot of excitement - initially perhaps largely due to being able to complete a tube journey and drink a coffee without two little people attached but as soon as I arrived I had a feeling it would amount to a lot more than that.

My first reflection is that I didn't know what I was letting myself in for. I had an idea of the concept of community leadership having read Barack Obama's autobiography but that was really as far as it went. My motivation for attending was primarily down to the desire to give something back, to help those in a less fortunate position than myself and perhaps selfishly to allow myself to watch the news with slightly less guilt at my good fortune to be born in the relative wealth and safety of the UK. The bomb on the District Line as I was travelling from Wimbledon to Waterloo added poignancy. I was struck by the incredible diversity within the room of other delegates who all had far more interesting stories to tell, from the guy who told a story of seeing drug deals on the way to the course to the woman who was a victim of modern day slavery. A slight feeling of being a fraud was undone by excellent hosting skills from Pete Brierley who made everyone feel welcome and valued - I learnt a lot just from watching him work the room.

We covered sessions on power (not the dirty word you might think) and how it can be used for good, identifying people's self interest to establish common causes and motivations via one to one conversations, and the art of negotiation, brilliantly exposed through a series of role plays, as was I when I was asked to go first - aaah! So my second reflection is that being with people who are passionate for a cause is inspiring, and that seeking power to do good is something to admire; we can achieve so much when we work together as the numerous cases studies used by the facilitators demonstrated.

It was a truly challenging and inspirational few days and leaves me with the question of what next. I feel like I still need to find 'my cause' and I perhaps left with more questions than answers but the training was undoubtedly an excellent, thought provoking starting point and I'm looking forward to seeing where the conversations with Merton citizens takes us."

Susan Shriver:

"Merton Priory Team, Merton Citizens, South London Citizens, UK Citizens, together we are stronger and we all have a place at the table. I was able to attend a two day training with Citizens, it taught me that we can make changes whether small ones in our local community or bigger ones in London and the whole of the UK through actions. In order to get change, we need to be prepared, organized and mobilized. Our preparation is through our stories. We all have stories that need to be heard. Come talk to me about your story."

The Next Big Gathering...

...will be on Monday 16th October, 6.30-8.00pm, at St Mark's Church, St Mark's Road, Mitcham. This will be a chance to hear reports of the listening campaign, and begin to determine the issues we're passionate about working on. This meeting needs a good number of people to go along, so that the voices of our community are heard. We'd love to know who is going from our parish – let Chris Palmer know – rector@ht-sw.org.uk

What are the issues that YOU want to work on? Housing, mental well-being, work-life balance, access to services... Come along to make sure your voice is heard.

And later...

In January 2018 a delegates assembly will vote on the projects Merton Citizens will address. We'll be looking to turn out a BIG NUMBER so that our votes count at this meeting

In March 2018, a big meeting will launch Merton Citizens publicly. We're working towards getting a meeting of hundreds of people, and making a big impact in our Borough.

Watch out for this dates. Plan to come along.