

Commission on Parliamentary Reform

Easterhouse community consultation event, Monday 6 March 2017

Note of discussions

Group 1

We asked: What do you know about the Scottish Parliament and do you know the distinction between parliament and government?

You said:

- Despite some of the group having visited Parliament and studying at primary school there was still some uncertainty about the role of Parliament/Government
- There was some uncertainty about the additional devolved powers and a clear description being made available would be useful.
- One person had given evidence to a committee and had found the experience open and friendly, and language used appropriate (in layman's terms)
- A clear distinction between Parliament and Government would be beneficial as it would help people know who to approach for help.
- Role of committees was unclear

We asked: What would make engagement easier?

You said:

- Committees going out into communities to take evidence would be less intimidating than a meeting in Parliament
- Witnesses invited to speak at Parliament should be given an opportunity to visit before the meeting, observe and meet the people involved in order to know what to expect and feel more comfortable.

We asked: Are there any barriers to getting more involved?

You said:

- Difficult to find information on Parliament's website
- It's challenging trying to get new people involved (e.g. in community councils), so often same voices heard.
- Although there may be opportunities for schools to get involved in consultations often the priorities lie elsewhere in the curriculum
- Digital exclusion
- People will only get involved if issues affect them directly

We asked: How well does the Scottish Parliament communicate?

You said:

- Leaflets are not well read - online and social media more useful
- A Scottish Parliament App would be useful
- Promote positive/relevant messages through Facebook and Twitter at a local/community level.

Recommendations

1. Scottish Parliament should go out into communities more
2. The Parliament needs to explain more clearly what it does and why.
3. Communicate in formats that people can access easily and are easy to understand.
4. Always feedback after consultation events.

Group 2

We asked: What have been your experiences engaging with the Scottish Parliament

You said:

- You do not always receive feedback when you have provided your views on a bill. This can be disheartening and put you off from engaging in the future.
- It can sometimes feel like Committees come to speak to communities as a tick box exercise so they can say they have been engaged with. Sense they have not actually been listened to.
- The Scottish Parliament should make more of an effort to come out into communities and focus on issues that are directly impacting them.
- It can be hugely beneficial for young people to visit parliament, however to often the expense of traveling to Edinburgh means people are unable to visit. The Parliament should therefore do more to assist groups, especially those supporting vulnerable young people to allow them to visit.

We asked: What do you know about the Scottish Parliament and do you know the distinction between parliament and government?

You said:

- Some of the group had visited the Parliament and studied it at school, however there was still a general lack of understanding of the difference between Parliament and Government and when trying to find out can be overwhelmed by the amount of information available.
- The work of the Government tends to get more news coverage therefore has a higher profile.

Recommendations

- Education from an early age is vital. A form of citizenship classes in schools teaching young people how the parliament works and how they can influence the decision making is important if people are to be truly empowered and be involved.
- It is important the Parliament comes out into schools, doesn't need to be MSPs, to inform young people how the Parliament works.
- Once people have the knowledge they will feel more comfortable to get involved.