

Learning

Public Engagement Issues

Main Heading	Issue
Measuring Success	What does success look like? How do we measure it?
	Definition of public engagement (shared).
	The return on investment is hard to measure once public engagement is embedded in the culture of the organisation.
Organisational Capacity	Existing organisational structures can compromise innovation and free thinking.
	Protected pay and posts prohibit progress/change.
	Content rich rather than process rich.
	There is no single method of PE for all projects.
	Many organisations have opened major changes to public engagement, but need to do the same with service delivery and improvement.
	There are often quite clear regulations on what can and can't be influenced by the public. Organisations can get better at public engagement, but expectations around it are also rising, so continuous improvement is necessary.
	Need to plan a way forward and decide what the organisation needs. Need a PE Strategy which is clear about why you are doing it, how and contains realistic objectives.
Resources and Finance	Can be expensive.
	There is a danger that organisations are having to retrench due to cut-backs.
	Another challenge is value for money. What difference does PE make? Is it worth spending?
Culture	How can we make the pockets of good practice mainstream?
	Values and belief – not just a process
	Need to get people thinking in a different way.
	It is easier to buy in at strategic, theoretical level than on the ground.
	There is a 'tick box' approach to PE, which is symbolic of deeper apathy among organisations.
	It is not just another PR tool.
	There is a danger of 'going through the motions'.
	Public engagement often triggers / raises issues of culture, behaviour and values as well as processes.
	A major challenge is that PE is not always recognised as meaningful, only as an add-on or an interference/burden, just as a routine.
	Need to maintain any organisational cultural changes; this shows that the Council is working hard on PE and gives the public confidence.
Trust	How can this be measured? How do you measure attitudinal changes? Need tangible examples, showing slow development as you redesign relationship with community.

	Trust in specialist authority is lower now.
Terms of Engagement	Isn't this about marketing concepts – 'marketing' your brand?
	Don't only listen to concerns that fit policy priorities.
	Need to create avenues for PE, not just initiate PE to promote an agenda.
	PE must be relevant, interesting, timely and entertaining.
	There is a tendency to listen to the public only if concerns fit policy decisions.
	Organisations have to respond to PE if they offer it.