



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday February 1 2010
at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Fiona Colley (Chair)
Councillor Jane Salmon (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor John Friary
Councillor Adedokun Lasaki
Councillor Chris Page
Councillor Veronica Ward
Councillor Lorraine Zuleta

EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE: Colin Elliott, Parent Governor

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Simon Chambers, Corporate Strategy
Stephen Gaskell, Business and Partnerships Manager
Karen Harris, Scrutiny Project Manager
Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barrie Hargrove and Richard Thomas.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 The chair accepted item 7, Councillor Call for Action, as a late and urgent item.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 The chair, Councillor Fiona Coley, declared a prejudicial interest in item 7, Councillor Call for Action, as a member of Nunhead & Peckham Rye Community Council.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 11 January 2010 be agreed as a correct and accurate record.

5. HALF YEAR BUSINESS REPORT - 2009/10

5.1 The business and partnerships manager introduced the half year business report 2009/10. Members considered the report and made the following comments.

General

5.2 Members highlighted that no reference was made to red or green flags, leaving it unclear as to what the council was doing to promote good performance or challenge poor performance. Some members felt that the report should make clear why targets were not being met and what was being done to address the situation. The business and partnerships manager clarified that use of green and red flags in other reports demonstrated how the local strategic partnership was delivering against its priorities whereas the business report set out the council's contribution.

5.3 Members queried why the majority of data was only given up to September 2009. The business and partnerships manager pointed out that some of the information went beyond September but that other information was not available at the time the report was put together, sometimes due to a time delay necessitated by verification of data. It was envisaged that the annual report would be produced in the summer.

Places where people love to live

5.4 Members sought assurance that plans for redeveloping the Elephant & Castle were "broadly on track" (paragraph 9). The business and partnerships manager reported that this was in respect of the project plans currently in place.

5.5 Members raised concerns in respect of NI 155, Number of affordable homes delivered. In 2009/10, 650 had been delivered against a target of 900 and in 2008/09, 479 against the same target. Members asked what had been the 2007/08 end of year outturn and asked for confirmation that the 2011 target of 2,215 affordable homes would be met.

5.6 Members also raised concerns about the number of homes made decent. Paragraph 14 of the report stated that, at the end of September, 391 homes had been made decent against an end of year target of 1,806. Members asked for details of how the council would get back on track. They also asked where the Southwark Decent Homes Standard was set out – for instance was it contained within the Housing Strategy – and did any definition clearly specify how it differed from the national standard. Members of the committee requested the numbers achieved in the first quarter of 2009/10 and clarity as to what homes were included

in the totals (was it completed homes or homes where work had started?).

Everyone achieving their potential

- 5.7 Members noted paragraph 25 of the report which gave details of an event in Peckham Square in July and asked how many residents had attended and how many people ended up in work as a result.
- 5.8 The committee highlighted NI 092 (Narrowing the gap – lowest achieving 20% the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile vs the rest) and NI 117 (16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)). They sought further explanation of the definition of NI 092 and specifically whether the measurement should be going up or down. The business and partnerships manager commented that this was a new target. In respect of NI 117 the committee questioned the lack of a target. The business and partnerships manager explained that this was still under discussion. In terms of the half year outturn data 2009/10 members suggested an amendment to the format to take out columns showing “not applicable” or “not available”.

Promoting healthy and independent living

- 5.9 Members of the committee drew attention to paragraphs 28, 32 and 33:
- (Paragraph 28 – last sentence) The committee asked for sight of the chief executive’s letter requesting parliamentary scrutiny of the Care Quality Commission
 - (Paragraph 32) The committee sought confirmation that Southwark was not the worst borough
 - (Paragraph 33) Members asked for examples of the council meeting the challenge of reducing unhealthy weight in children and specifically what was the impact of Southwark’s Healthy Weight Strategy
- 5.10 The committee also drew attention to NI 040 (Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment) and NI 141 (Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living). Members queried target setting in respect of NI 040, in particular whether achieving a higher target was an improvement and what the percentage rate indicated. The business and partnerships manager explained that targets were set on the basis of 2007/08 information and that there would be opportunity to review at the end of the year. Members also sought an explanation for the 8% fall in performance against NI 141 and asked whether the target should be revised in light of the fall.

Valuing the environment

- 5.11 Members of the committee highlighted NI 186 (Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area), NI 192 (Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting), NI 195a and 195b (Improved street and environmental cleanliness (litter and detritus)) and NI 198 (Overall proportion of children travelling to school by car and Park & Walk).

- 5.12 In respect of NI 186, members queried why no target had been set and asked when it would be set and at what periods it would be reviewed. The committee requested Quarter 3 figures for NI 192 and sought clarification of the definitions relating to NI 195a and 195b. The committee was unclear as to what the target set out in NI 198 reflected, whether the aim was for it to increase or decrease and when it would be reviewed. Members also asked for details of who measured performance against the target.
- 5.13 The committee also drew attention to paragraph 36 of the report which gave the council's commitment to reducing its CO2 emissions and the carbon footprint from its estates as being 8.5% by 2011. Members sought an explanation for the disparity between this target and the target of 10% as set out in the 10:10 Agreement. They asked how the council was planning to reduce its carbon emissions. Some members commented that, on their own, publicity events like Big Switch Off would not achieve the reduction and asked whether the move to Tooley Street would contribute.

Tackling the crimes which concern people the most

- 5.14 Members of the committee asked for details of what the council was doing to reduce serious crime and domestic violence.

Transforming public services

- 5.15 Some members of the committee queried the reported customer satisfaction with the housing repair service - given as 90% - and took the view that a breakdown of this by area office and by type of repair would be useful. Members sought clarification of how statistics were collected and of at what point a complaint was considered closed (i.e. when an appointment was made or when the repair was done?). Members also asked whether random customer satisfaction surveys were carried out. If call-backs were still in operation the committee considered that scripts should be reviewed. The committee agreed that Scrutiny Sub-committee A take these issues on board as part of its ongoing review of the housing repairs service.
- 5.15 The committee noted paragraph 46 of the report which stated that the council had invited potential contractors to submit plans on how they would deliver investment on council homes through a major works programme over the next ten years. Members asked for clarification as to whether the invitation to contractors make reference to the Southwark Decent Homes Standard.
- 5.15 Members queried the inclusion of biennial surveys in NI 004 (% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality and NI 160 Local Authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services). The business and partnerships manager explained that leaving the indicator out might invite questions from the auditors.

RESOLVED:

1. That the business and partnerships manager be asked to co-ordinate responses to the issues raised above, with a view to appropriate senior officers being asked to the next meeting of the committee to provide any clarification considered necessary by members.
2. That senior housing officers be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on the council's delivery of affordable homes and of decent homes.

6. FINAL SCRUTINY REPORT: FOOD STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS (SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE B)

- 6.1 The committee deferred a decision on the final scrutiny report from Scrutiny Sub-committee B, food strategy recommendations, until its next meeting in order to allow the chair of the sub-committee to attend, present the report and answer questions.

7. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

- 7.1 The committee gave initial consideration to the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) received from Councillor Robert Smeath. The committee took the view that, in the absence of Councillor Smeath, it could not come to a decision as to whether the CCfA was valid and could be referred on for scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Smeath be asked to attend the committee's next meeting in order to formally sponsor the CCfA and be asked to provide further details of his attempts to resolve the matter.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the closed section of the meeting held on 11 January 2010 be agreed as a correct and accurate record.

The meeting ended at 9.12pm.