



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 19 January 2015 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Rosie Shimell (Shimell)
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai
Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Catherine Dale
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Tom Flynn
Councillor Rebecca Lury
Councillor Adele Morris
Councillor Martin Seaton (Reserve)
Councillor Johnson Situ

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member, Public Health, Parks & Leisure
Councillors Darren Merrill and Michael Situ, Cabinet Members, Environment, Recycling, Community Safety & Volunteering

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Deborah Collins, Strategic Director for Environment & Leisure
Norman Coombe, Legal Services
Des Waters, Head of Public Realm
Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Maugham, Councillor Martin Seaton attended as a reserve member. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Anood Al-Samerai.

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

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 Councillor Johnson Situ indicated that the Cabinet Member, Councillor Michael Situ was his brother. The chair, Councillor Gavin Edwards, reported in respect of the Unison submission on the procurement report that he worked at a national level for Unison.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the addition of Councillor Catherine Dale's apologies for absence to the meeting of 1 December 2014, the minutes of the meetings held on 10 November and 1 December 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEWS - COUNCILLORS DARREN MERRILL AND MICHAEL SITU, ENVIRONMENT, RECYCLING, COMMUNITY SAFETY & VOLUNTEERING

5.1 Councillor Michael Situ explained that his part of the portfolio focussed on community safety and volunteering. In terms of community safety, the council continued to strengthen its partnership with the police, safeguarding boards, the probation service and other agencies. Councillor Situ reported that residents would like to see the noise service respond more to non-statutory nuisance and, along with community groups and councillors, would like better communication from the service. In terms of anti-social behaviour, the council was using every power possible within the anti-social behaviour team to bring individuals to justice. The council's investment in CCTV was paying dividends with arrest rates going up. Community wardens continued to work hard. The stream-lined approach of the domestic abuse service meant that cases were being dealt with appropriately but a lot of individuals were still not being referred or were not aware of the service. Councillor Situ also reported that in his role in promoting volunteering amongst residents he was working with the Volunteer Centre and Community Action Southwark, amongst others. The council was also looking at empowering staff in this area. It was important that volunteer services were managed effectively. Councillor Situ commented that Southwark was fortunate in that a significant number of businesses wanted to make a contribution to the community sector.

5.2 Councillor Darren Merrill explained that he was responsible for the areas of environment and recycling. In respect of cleaning of estates, a recent survey of fifty estates in the country had placed Southwark first in terms of cleaning and second in terms of maintenance. Street cleaning was meeting targets and fly-tipping, graffiti and dog-fouling were all reducing. Councillor Merrill indicated that

he was happy to answer questions.

- 5.3 Councillor Karl Eastham stated that the community wardens provided an excellent service and that this should be protected as much as possible. In terms of the noise team, he was concerned that in the Elephant & Castle area, residents did not know where to call and that there was no central place where antisocial behaviour calls were collated. Councillor Situ agreed about the effectiveness of the warden service and commented that Southwark was one of the few boroughs which still had an enforcement team in the form of wardens. It was important that this was protected. Councillor Situ confirmed that the intention was that residents contact the noise team through the call centre. He agreed that providing a range of numbers could appear confusing and said that he would ensure that the appropriate number was promoted in order to remind residents.
- 5.4 Councillor Rosie Shimell, the vice-chair, noted the increased CCTV coverage in Southwark but also wondered how action taken in respect of antisocial neighbours was monitored and results fed back to residents. Councillor Situ responded that the council had invested significantly in CCTV over the last four years and that this was bearing fruit in that arrest rates were now around 90%. He was committed to a review of all areas across the borough to determine where CCTV could be installed. A survey was being undertaken in order to establish where there might be hot spots of antisocial behaviour and crime and the council was trying to identify funding. In terms of the noise team, residents had raised that most nuisance was non-statutory. Officers were being encouraged to take earlier action and a softer approach, for instance speaking to perpetrators and sending warning letters or notices.
- 5.5 Councillor Shimell asked Councillor Merrill whether the proposed budget would result in any changes to street cleaning and refuse collection schedules. Councillor Merrill stated that street cleaning had been protected as far as possible and would not be affected by budget cuts.
- 5.6 Councillor Jasmine Ali asked Councillor Situ whether working with the council's partners on safeguarding boards was going well. Councillor Situ commented that it was essential that the council worked with its partner agencies. The new domestic abuse strategy would not have the depth that it did without the contribution of safeguarding boards and the Safer Southwark Partnership Board. Councillor Ali also asked about the council's commitment that no school leaver would be out of a job or not in training and whether this linked to apprenticeships. Councillor Situ reported that he was working with Councillor Ian Wingfield to challenge the council as to what further apprenticeship places it could create. He was also challenging firms in the borough and having discussions with Pricewaterhouse Coopers and businesses along the South Bank.
- 5.7 Councillor Tom Flynn commented that he represented a ward that was on the border with other authorities and that this could cause problems for bins and waste

collection. He wondered about the impact of the serious government cuts in funding to local authorities in London. Significant cuts to refuse collection services in other authorities might lead to fly tipping and dumping rubbish in Southwark and Councillor Flynn asked whether Councillor Merrill had talked to his equivalent cabinet members in neighbouring councils. Councillor Merrill stated that he was happy to talk to bordering councils and asked for details of any specific streets that were of concern. In response to a question from Councillor Johnson Situ, Councillor Merrill stated that Southwark was good at collecting fly tipping and in the past year had often made a collection even before it was reported. Fly tipping was an inter council problem and Southwark was focusing on education and enforcement.

- 5.8 Councillor Adele Morris asked Councillor Merrill about issues in respect of air quality and pollution. With the changes being made to the Elephant & Castle roundabout, residents of Perronet House were concerned that traffic would be brought closer to them and impact on air quality. Councillor Morris asked this be taken into consideration in any discussions with Transport for London. Councillor Merrill clarified that Councillor Mark Williams was the Cabinet Member responsible for transport but that inter-departmental conversations were being set up in terms of air quality, especially around schools. He commented that special paint was being tested at the Box Park at the Elephant & Castle to see whether it would improve air quality. Councillor Morris urged Councillor Merrill to work as closely as possible with Councillor Williams.
- 5.9 Councillor Morris was also concerned that Southwark did not seem to be able to be as tough in terms of licensing policies as some London boroughs appeared to be. She asked Councillor Situ whether he was willing to look at how other authorities implemented saturation policies and to work with planning departments. Councillor Situ was aware that there was some frustration amongst officers and stated that he would be happy to look at other boroughs.
- 5.10 Councillor Rebecca Lury reported that she had been told that CCTV could not be introduced into her ward and asked what alternatives were available. Councillor Situ indicated that some areas were not ideal for CCTV and that he had challenged officers to look at other means. Alternatives might include a combination of the warden service, the neighbourhood police team and neighbourhood watch.
- 5.11 Councillor Catherine Dale asked both Cabinet Members what areas they were most concerned about in view of the fact that increasing budget cuts were likely to continue to affect local authorities in London. Councillor Situ commented that within community safety there was a huge area of statutory requirement and that most of the pressure would be on non-statutory activity. The council had to look at new ways of working, for instance some boroughs were looking at a multi-disciplinary approach and combining roles. Councillor Merrill responded that all the

services within his portfolio were front of house and that these had managed to be protected over the past four or five years. He was however worried about any further cuts. Attempts were being made to produce more income with looking at using the council's expertise and contracting out on a commercial bases to bring in income to help the bottom line. Councillor Situ added that officers were speaking to other boroughs in order to see whether Southwark could provide services to them.

- 5.12 Councillor Martin Seaton commented that in his view the cemetery services should be intended to serve only those recently deceased in Southwark and asked whether the council was able to cope with the numbers applying to be buried in the borough. He was also concerned as to whether the council could afford the warden service. Councillor Merrill agreed that cemeteries were intended for local residents and explained that the pricing structure was structured to deter other applicants. The council had around five years left of burials and was working on five more years' worth which came from the Cemeteries Strategy. Des Waters, Head of Public Realm, added that the demand for burials was around 230 per year with 10% of those coming from out of the borough. In terms of the warden service, Councillor Situ repeated that it was very difficult to balance the budget and that every area would face pressures. Officers were looking at whether the service could be sold to businesses and other agencies, for instance Better Bankside and the parks department. Every attempt was being made to maximise income for example from fixed penalty notices.
- 5.13 The chair referred to a previous scrutiny review of domestic violence and to the service provided by Solace. One question raised in the review was whether there were the right number of domestic violence caseworkers necessary to meet demand. He asked whether Councillor Situ could look into this. Councillor Situ was clear that the service had to meet the demand. His understanding was that in 2014/15 there were around 700 referrals. The key concern was that a system had been created which would encourage people to report and to be referred onwards. Councillor Situ stated that he would like to see more numbers reporting and to ensure that the service could deal with this. He was not aware that there were insufficient caseworkers but he was happy to look into this. Residents needed to be confident in the service in order to report incidents of domestic abuse. The domestic abuse strategy was the product of input from many people across the community. It was clear that early intervention was essential and Councillor Situ hoped that the primary care system would take a more active approach.
- 5.14 The chair commented that the Women's Safety Charter was a success but wondered how this could be taken to the next level and extended beyond licensed premises. Councillor Situ responded that the charter addressed the night-time economy and that work was needed to look at the daytime. During the consultation, significant numbers reported that they experienced harassment while

walking around during the day. This needed to be challenged. Another area of work was to encourage contractors to introduce a stronger code of conduct for employees. In addition, work was needed with schools as young people still felt that these were not always a safe environment. The council was also talking with Transport for London about the bus and transport network.

- 5.15 In response to another question from the chair, Councillor Merrill reported that the recycling rate was now 36.63% and improving. The main headline was that landfill had been reduced with an improvement of 11% in the previous year. A publicity campaign was taking place this summer to encourage recycling and the council now had an excellent waste facility on the Old Kent Road. In response to a question from Councillor Morris, Councillor Merrill indicated that he would look into clothes recycling but emphasised that there were recycling banks available, for instance outside supermarkets and some charity shops.

6. FREE SWIM AND GYM IMPLEMENTATION

- 6 6.1 Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Parks & Leisure, introduced the report.
- 6.2 Councillor Karl Eastham asked why Southwark was not considering the Birmingham model. Councillor Hargrove emphasised the need for the pilot to reach those people who needed it most. The Birmingham model was very complex, for instance sessions needed to be booked in advance, were only for an hour and were available at different leisure centres on different days. Southwark was instead looking at quiet periods, three days a week, and allowing people to come as much as they liked. In Councillor Hargrove's view, the proposal in the report would be better than the Birmingham model.
- 6.3 Councillor Adele Morris highlighted page 12 of the report and the recommendation in respect of free swimming for 18s and under (page 2). She pointed out that costings had been omitted. Councillor Hargrove acknowledged that this was an error. Deborah Collins, Strategic Director for Environment and Leisure, emphasised that costs could only be estimates. Lost income and additional costs were hard to predict, for instance increased maintenance costs and the impact on monthly memberships. Figures in the report should be seen as indicative and providing relative costs of the different models. Councillor Morris suggested that this should be made clearer. The strategic director referred her to the warning set out in paragraph 72.
- 6.4 Councillor Rebecca Lury asked how the council would target those people who would benefit most from access to free swim and gym facilities, for instance the increased numbers referred through GPs and NHS health checks. In addition, how would the council make clear to other residents that there was more to come

following this initial offer? Councillor Hargrove drew the committee's attention to paragraph 45 in the report. He also explained that the Public Health Team was working closely with GPs. Councillor Hargrove acknowledged that there was a lot of work to do and that communication was crucial. He welcomed any ideas from members. The strategic director added that the council needed to ensure that all marketing explained that this was a pilot and that the council was developing a general offer. The marketing needed to clarify who was eligible and that the pilot would be launched in two stages. It needed to encourage people to register for the card necessary to access the pilot. The strategic director stressed that this was a work in progress and that part of the process would be to bring back reports to the cabinet in December and regularly to the committee. Officers were working with Fusion and the Communications Team to make use of all sorts of communication channels. The chair asked whether a communications plan had been drawn up and whether the committee could see this. The strategic director replied that an outline plan was in existence and that a future plan could be circulated to members of the committee.

- 6.5 The chair commented that the council was piloting something different to what would ultimately be delivered. He asked why the pilot was not in a particular part of the borough but delivering what would eventually be delivered. The strategic director replied that there was a risk of over capacity at a particular leisure centre in the borough. Also, officers would learn from the pilot as it was currently being proposed. Councillor Hargrove stated that he would have liked to have brought in the full offer sooner but that it was necessary to have discussions with the leisure provider and that the full offer could not be brought in until 2016.
- 6.6 Councillor Rosie Shimell asked how the council would be able to use findings from the pilot in order to make forward projections about capacity when a full scheme was rolled out. She also asked whether any focus groups were taking place with the identified groups and whether cost was always a contributing factor in terms of take-up of leisure facilities. Councillor Hargrove felt that there was a strong likelihood that there would be an over demand. The council could consider focus groups but these did not always ensure the most representative views. Limiting factors included not only cost but also cultural factors and general confidence. Councillor Jasmine Ali, chair of the Children's and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee, expressed concern about the obesity rate amongst children and stressed that schools must be amongst the first ports of call to publicise the pilot. It was also important to work alongside families. Councillor Hargrove agreed that it was essential to look at use of leisure centres by schools, whether children under 16 were able to swim and to ensure the availability of swimming lessons.
- 6.7 Councillor Johnson Situ commented that it would be interesting to see whether people changed their membership as a result of the pilot. He also wondered how the results of the pilot would be evaluated. Officers confirmed that it would be

important to evaluate feedback from people who came to use the leisure centres and also to find out why other people did not take up the offer. Conversations were underway with Sport England who were providing resources to evaluate data provided by Fusion. In terms of people changing their membership, they would be asked to do an exit questionnaire.

- 6.8 Councillor Catherine Dale underlined the public health aspects of the pilot and the hope that it would change behaviour amongst Southwark's population. She was concerned that the pilot did not target all key groups, for instance financially stretched families, and wondered whether services could be adapted so that they were more welcoming. She asked whether staff were being trained to help people use the service especially where they were first time users. The strategic director explained that the council was working closely with Fusion and that one strand of this work was to review induction, training and customer care. The general offer planned for 2016 would allow a longer lead-in time to explore how services could best be provided. The strategic director stressed that there were financial constraints in the current year as to how many people could be targeted. All those not targeted in the pilot could be considered for the general offer, bearing in mind that wider funding would be necessary. Councillor Dale emphasised the need to target communications.
- 6.9 Councillor Anood Al-Samerai stated that, in the last election, people had voted on the Labour group's commitment to provide free swim and gym facilities as set out in the Labour manifesto. She asked the Cabinet Member why he had not found the £8 million necessary to introduce a full and general offer as had been promised. She remained unsure as to why Southwark was not adopting either the Birmingham or Leeds model as set out in the report. Councillor Al-Samerai also highlighted a council question at the July Council Assembly meeting about a pilot of 100 patients. Subsequently, when he had attended a meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, it had appeared that the Leader of the Council did not know what this was about. Councillor Hargrove responded that the council had not anticipated the £30 million cuts required this year. Free swim and gym would be delivered to all residents in 2016. He clarified again that in his view the Southwark offer was better than that of Birmingham as the Birmingham offer was based around different leisure centres on different days and people had to book in advance. The strategic director added that maybe the report was not clear enough on this aspect. The Birmingham and Leeds models only offered limited times each day. In terms of the pilot referred to at Council Assembly, this was a small project led by the Public Health Team and the strategic director offered to look into and circulate details of the outcome of this to members.
- 6.10 Councillor Martin Seaton was concerned about the capacity of leisure centres to meet demand from target groups and the future demand in 2016. He also wondered whether there would be further collaboration with the NHS particularly in

order to bring in more funding. Councillor Hargrove hoped that the NHS would provide more funding and emphasised that Public Health was playing a full role. In terms of capacity, the pilot would help to establish this.

- 6.11 Councillor Adele Morris highlighted the need for school swimming lessons. She commented that the Elephant & Castle leisure centre was due to open in the summer, the provision of facilities at Canada Water was a long way off and the Seven Islands Centre had problems. In terms of access to swimming lessons, she asked whether there was any possibility of extending the pilot to facilities not owned by the council. Councillor Hargrove stated that he would look into this.
- 6.12 Councillor Tom Flynn sought clarification in respect of security of the access card, for instance whether there was any need to demonstrate that the card was being used by the person to whom it was registered. Officers confirmed that this was a serious issue and that a lot of work was being done on this aspect. At the moment when users swiped their card at a leisure centre, their picture appeared on the screen at reception. In addition, Fusion did spot checks on cards. The chair wondered whether registration for cards could be linked to voter registration and act as an incentive for this. Councillor Al-Samerai was concerned at the impact of this on data protection.
- 6.13 The chair noted references in the report to the leisure provider and to the end of the current fusion contract. He asked whether there was an intention to go back out to the market and whether consideration had been given to keeping the service in house. Councillor Hargrove replied that all options would be looked at. He stressed that his priority was to deliver free swim and gym to those people who needed it the most.

7. COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT - DRAFT SCRUTINY REPORT

- 7.1 The chair, Councillor Gavin Edwards, indicated that section nineteen of the report should be deleted.
- 7.2 Councillor Tom Flynn referred to recommendation five in respect of lower contract thresholds. He was disappointed that officers had given the impression that Southwark's contract thresholds were on a par with those of other London boroughs or towards the lower end. The chair noted that the committee had asked for details of officers' bench-marking but that this had only referred to seven councils.
- 7.3 Councillor Johnson Situ wondered whether there was any scope for including deadlines in the report. The chair suggested that recommendation one proposing a new Southwark "Fairer Future" Commissioning and Procurement Strategy would address this.

- 7.4 Councillor Catherine Dale noted that the report focused on getting contracts right in the first place. She wondered whether the ongoing management of contracts should be emphasised. The chair responded that this was mentioned within the scope of the report and that the committee might consider doing further scrutiny of contract management in the future.
- 7.5 Councillor Anood Al-Samerai highlighted that a Liberal Democrat administration had brought pest control in-house. The chair agreed that this should be added to table two which gave examples of large scale procurement which had underperformed in Southwark. Councillor Al-Samerai also suggested that recommendation eight should include a reference to training Southwark residents so that they were in a position to apply for apprenticeships. She was also concerned that the council needed to address gender pay gaps and pay differentials.
- 7.6 In conclusion, the chair indicated that the report would be amended to take account of the discussion and would be circulated to members of the committee before it was submitted to cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm