



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 25 June 2014 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Rosie Shimell (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai
Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Catherine Dale
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Tom Flynn
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Rebecca Lury
Councillor Claire Maugham
Councillor Adele Morris

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Norman Coombe, Legal Services
Graeme Gordon, Director of Corporate Strategy
Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing and Community Services
Fitzroy Williams, Scrutiny Project Assistant

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Johnson Situ and Ms Lynette Murphy O'Dwyer. Councillor Jon Hartley attended as a reserve.

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

2.1 There were no late items.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 31 March and 6 May 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

5. SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2014/15

- 5.1 The chair, Councillor Gavin Edwards, stated that he intended to pursue a more substantial work programme for the committee, which might mean longer meetings. The committee would produce written reports, as opposed to just agreeing recommendations at the end of meetings, with a greater focus on policy development. The chair also stated that he would like to see live streaming of meetings and the posting of video recordings online. He would also be asking for an email to be sent to members of staff inviting suggestions for scrutiny items and for a survey form to be made available to the public on the council website.
- 5.2 The committee considered the arrangements for overview and scrutiny over the coming municipal year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the size and composition of the overview and scrutiny committee, as agreed by annual council assembly on 11 June 2014, be noted.
2. That the following three scrutiny sub-committees be constituted for the municipal year 2014/15, each composed of five Labour members and two Liberal Democrat members:

Education and Children's Services

(Membership to include four voting education representatives and one non-voting head-teachers' representative.)

Healthy Communities

Housing and Community Safety (with responsibility for crime and disorder)

(Membership to include one representative and reserve from Tenants' Council and Homeowners' Council.)

3. That chairs and vice-chairs of the scrutiny sub-committees be appointed as set out below:

Education and Children's Services

Chair - Councillor Jasmine Ali

Vice-Chair - Councillor Lisa Rajan

Healthy Communities

Chair - Councillor Rebecca Lury
Vice-Chair - Councillor David Noakes

Housing and Community Safety

Chair - Councillor Tom Flynn
Vice-Chair - Councillor Ben Johnson

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

- 6.1 The chairs of the three sub-committees all stressed that they would be inviting members to put forward ideas for scrutiny reviews at the first meetings of the sub-committees. Councillor Tom Flynn, Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee, identified housing repairs, leaseholder charges and the women's safety charter as possible areas of review. Councillor Rebecca Lury, Healthy Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee, indicated that the sub-committee might look at healthy high streets, adult social care and priorities of the public health function within the council. Councillor Jasmine Ali, Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee, stated that the sub-committee's work programme might include school governance, school meals and combating the sexual exploitation of children. She was also keen to set up a Facebook page for the sub-committee in order to share information.
- 6.2 The chair of the committee, Councillor Gavin Edwards, outlined the areas that he was suggesting that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee look at over the coming year. These included the council's contract procurement strategy, the building of eleven thousand council homes, free gym and pool use for residents and school places. The vice-chair, Councillor Rosie Shimell, asked that the committee continue to monitor the regeneration of the Elephant & Castle. The chair agreed that regeneration across the borough was an important area for scrutiny and proposed that the committee have regular report backs on the major regeneration projects. He also felt that it was important to continue to interview cabinet members. Councillor Adele Morris emphasised that it was important to put interview dates in the diaries of cabinet members as soon as possible. Councillor Anood Al-Samerai put forward the management of members' casework as an area for a future review, once new members had gained experience of it.
- 6.3 The Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services, Gerri Scott, and the Director of Corporate Strategy, Graeme Gordon, gave a brief presentation on plans for the delivery of the eleven thousand new council homes. The Director of Corporate Strategy circulated a timeline beginning with the cabinet's commitment in June 2010 to make every home warm, dry and safe. The Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services added that a board would be created to oversee the delivery of the scheme. She stressed that there would be a requirement for huge community engagement and the necessity to unlock land for development in order to provide areas for the housing.

- 6.4 Councillor Catherine Dale agreed that it was essential to engage the community, stressing that the project was about building community and not only about the physical building of houses. Councillor Karl Eastham stressed the negative impact of right-to-buy on the council's housing stock. Councillor Flynn wondered whether the government would support any transfer of the housing stock to a separate council vehicle. Councillor Al-Samerai asked for detailed figures of the net increase in council housing by the end of the programme, taking account of right-to-buy. She also commented that there remained a great deal of misunderstanding about what was included within major works and particularly about whether green space remained safe. Councillor Claire Maugham asked how officers would engage with TMOs in the delivery of the new houses. The Officers assured the committee that this was a priority and that residents were kept up to date with all proposed works. In terms of protection of green space, the stage of mapping potential sites had not yet been reached. Finally, while figures in respect of right-to-buy were monitored, changes in government policy could accelerate or slow down the net increase in council properties.
- 6.5 The chair asked for further detail of any restriction of right-to-buy if new build was undertaken via a council vehicle (page 52 of the agenda). He also asked what progress had been made in terms of the next steps set out at page 17. Officers confirmed that a lot of work had already been undertaken in conjunction with Savills UK and that firmer plans would be in place by the end of the summer. Officers stressed that the delivery of eleven thousand homes was a key council priority. Councillor Morris remained concerned about the availability of land, particularly as this had been highlighted as a difficulty by the Savills report. The chair highlighted page 53 of the agenda and was concerned that the council might be hit by a large stamp duty charge.
- 6.6 The committee agreed to include the following items within its work programme for the year:
- council's contract procurement strategy
 - 11,000 new council homes
 - free gym and pool use for residents
 - school places
 - regular monitoring of major regeneration projects
 - management of members' casework
 - cabinet member interviews (to be split between Overview & Scrutiny Committee and its sub-committees)

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm