



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 9 March 2015 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Barrie Hargrove - Cabinet Member for Public Health, Parks & Leisure

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Jeremy Pilgrim - The Head of Property  
Doreen Forrester-Brown - The Director of Legal Services  
Peter Roberts - Scrutiny Project Manager

### 1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adele Morris and Mr Martin Brecknell and Mr Abdul Raheem Musa. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Rebecca Lury.

### 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**

- 4.1 The chair, Councillor Gavin Edwards, announced that Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager, was leaving the council after more than twenty-five years working in various departments. Members joined the chair in thanking Peter Roberts for his work in supporting the committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

#### **5. FREE SWIM & GYM - UPDATE FROM CABINET MEMBER**

- 5.1 Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Parks & Leisure, updated the committee on the communications plan to publicise the free swim and gym pilot scheme. He confirmed that the roll-out date for the full scheme was June 2016. Councillor Hargrove reported on the digital advertising campaign which included use of Spotify, Twitter, banner advertising on websites, Instagram and Snapchat. In addition, there would be email blasts to newsletter subscribers on school mailing lists and the Community Sports manager had recently presented details of the scheme to one hundred GPs.
- 5.2 Members of the committee highlighted the following areas of concern:
- how to attract younger people and BME and low income audiences
  - capturing as much data as possible about users of leisure centres
  - the pilot should be as much about getting the message out about the full offer to come as about trialling the scheme
  - publicising the scheme to staff who might have friends or relatives who could make use of the pilot
- 5.3 Councillor Hargrove agreed that it was important for the council to become smarter in communication as it moved towards the full offer in 2016. There were a range of barriers to use of leisure facilities which included health, time and self-efficacy. It was essential for the council to gather data about demand and the capacity of its leisure centres and for its aspirations to be built into a new contract with the leisure provider. Cards issued to users would collect relevant data.
- 5.4 Members of the committee wondered how they could get involved in publicising the pilot scheme. They also wondered whether officers were working closely with Public Health. Councillor Hargrove responded that in his ward a leaflet was being produced to highlight free swim and gym and that a similar approach could be taken up in other wards. He reported that Public Health was very much involved and had good connections with CCGs and hospitals. In April 2016, referrals from GPs would be invited. Councillor Hargrove confirmed that posters would be available for display in libraries and community areas and that these could also be used in hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

## 6. RENTS FOR COUNCIL PREMISES

- 6.1 Members were concerned that representatives from the voluntary sector should have the opportunity to express their views on this issue. The chair, Councillor Gavin Edwards, confirmed that there would be subsequent sessions to allow for this.
- 6.2 Jeremy Pilgrim, the head of property, introduced the report.
- 6.3 Members of the committee highlighted areas of concern:
- balancing consistency and fairness in rent setting against desire to support local business and community organisations
  - clarity of priorities
- 6.4 The head of property explained that a proportion of the council's estate was geared up as its commercial portfolio and a proportion as its voluntary sector portfolio. Most rents were reviewed every five years with open market rent geared to the market place.
- 6.5 Members asked how much communication there was across the council in respect of renting property to the voluntary sector. They also asked the extent of transparency in respect of the level of rents. The head of property indicated that there was close working with the community engagement team. An overview of rent totals and rents per square foot was available but specific rents were seen as commercial information and therefore confidential. In response to further questions, the head of property explained that council policy restricted the letting of premises to betting and money lending shops. The letting of property was also reviewed in terms of the requirements of the local area. Where the council did not own many properties, for instance on Rye Lane, it was restricted to trying to use its influence in planning terms.
- 6.6 Members were unclear as to the definition of the commercial and voluntary sector estates, for instance whether and how many properties were ear-marked for the voluntary sector. They also challenged whether, once a contract was signed, the level of commercial rent needed to remain confidential. Members felt it would be helpful to publicise rent levels. They also asked whether churches were treated in a particular way. The head of property explained that the voluntary portfolio had grown out of premises that could not be let commercially and included some offices that the council had moved out of. Publicising of rents was a commercial rather than a legal issue. Doreen Forrester-Brown, the director of legal services, offered to do a briefing note on this question. The head of property clarified that letting of property to churches usually came down to a question of planning issues, for example around parking and noise.
- 6.7 In response to further questions, the head of property stated his view that there should not be a separate voluntary and community sector estate but that the current flexibility should be retained in order to be able to respond to the market. He also informed the committee that properties tended to be re-let within three months. In terms of disposals of properties, he considered this to be part and

parcel of the council's regeneration programmes but was keen to retain an income producing commercial estate and improve the stock in the council's possession. The council was achieving around a 6% return on its estate, most of which went into the Housing Revenue Account.

- 6.8 The chair proposed that a future meeting invite evidence from representatives of Community Action Southwark and from a representative body for churches in Southwark. He also proposed that the committee receive the briefing paper from the director of legal services and a detailed breakdown of properties in both the commercial; and voluntary and community sector estates.

## **7. SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- 7.1 Councillor Tom Flynn, chair of the housing & community safety scrutiny sub-committee, updated the committee on the work of the sub-committee. This included reviewing the independent investigation into works at Draper House and the AA Vs Southwark eviction case. Members had been on visits with the noise team and housing repairs teams and were currently reviewing homelessness and a judicial review. The March meeting would consider a report on housing repairs.
- 7.2 Councillor Jasmine Ali, chair of the education & children's services scrutiny sub-committee, reported on the sub-committee's work programme. The sub-committee had focussed on attainment, adoption, child sexual exploitation, autism and free healthy school meals. Councillor Ali also informed the committee that there would be a policy seminar on attainment, adoption and child sexual exploitation.
- 7.3 Councillor Rebecca Lury, chair of the healthy communities scrutiny sub-committee, reported that the sub-committee had engaged with a number of external groups, including the CCG and hospitals. The director of public health attended all the sub-committee's meetings. The sub-committee's two major enquiries had centred on personalisation and the health of the borough. In addition, the sub-committee had interviewed three cabinet members.
- 7.4 The chair of the committee, Councillor Gavin Edwards, indicated that the committee's future work programme would include consideration of the results of the school places survey and the staff survey, further work on rents of council premises and continuing monitoring of the free swim and gym project.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**