Item No.	Classification:	Date:	Meeting Name:
7	Open	November 22 2005	Executive
Report title:		Southwark Alliance: links with the council's decision making structures	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Overview & Scrutiny Committee	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the executive receive the final report of the overview & scrutiny committee on Southwark Alliance, links with the council's decision making structures (Appendix 1), and the response of Southwark Alliance (Appendix 2).

2. That the executive consider and comment on the scrutiny recommendations and, in addition, on the specific recommendations arising out of Southwark Alliance's response (paragraphs 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 24, 31, 32, 34 and 35).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Southwark Alliance was the overview & scrutiny committee's major topic for review in 2004/5. This was in response to a feeling that, while the work of the Southwark Alliance and its sub-partnerships is increasingly important in the borough, it is not clear that this work is visible and responsive to the concerns of ward councillors and residents.

4. The overarching issue that emerged was of a democratic deficit around the Southwark Alliance – how the Alliance should feature in Southwark's governance arrangements and correspondingly how the governance structures need to adapt to accommodate partnership working. Overview & scrutiny committee suggests that, at the moment, the Southwark Alliance and the council have parallel structures with insufficient interrelationships.

5. The scrutiny report focuses on three main themes: the accountability and performance management arrangements for the Southwark Alliance; communication between the Southwark Alliance and the council; and the extent to which the Alliance has developed linkages to the democratic infrastructure of the borough.

6. The scrutiny report was considered by the Southwark Alliance Management Group at its September meeting. Their response is attached at Appendix 2 and key points are summarised below. The scrutiny report was also received and noted by council assembly on October 19 2005.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The following paragraphs summarise the discussion and recommendations of the scrutiny review and the response of the Southwark Alliance. The executive is invited to consider and comment on the scrutiny recommendations and, in addition, on the specific recommendations arising out of Southwark Alliance's

response. The recommendations are highlighted at paragraphs 9, 14, 17,18,19, 24, 31, 32, 34 and 35.

Scrutiny review:

8. The overview & scrutiny committee highlighted questions posed by the National LSP Evaluation and Action Research Programme in respect of governance arrangements, but was uncertain whether Southwark Alliance had considered these or made clear decisions around accountability. The committee was also unclear as to the accountability arrangements for Southwark's own representatives on the Alliance. There was a lack of understanding about the respective roles of Alliance partners and elected councillors. A need was identified to develop the role of scrutiny committees and community councils in this area. A further query raised was the robustness of the Alliance's standing orders and whether these should include formal arrangements for methods of public engagement (for example public questions and deputations).

Scrutiny recommendation:

9. **That Southwark Alliance reviews its accountability arrangements both to its member organisations and as a collective body, and as part of that review looks specifically at the robustness of the protocols in place for decision-making, and instituting formal arrangements for public engagement with the Southwark Alliance as a whole.**

Response of Southwark Alliance

10. Southwark Alliance's response to this recommendation is set out in full at Appendix 2. The Alliance is reviewing its functions, membership and its way of working, in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the challenges facing the borough. The aims of the review include ensuring clarity about the accountability of the Alliance to its members and vice versa, and about the relationship between the Alliance and the wider community of Southwark. As part of this, the Alliance would like to explore with the council the possibility of dovetailing scrutiny review programmes with the LSP performance management framework. This might include the council's scrutiny bodies carrying out reviews in areas where service outcomes fall short of national and local targets.

11. Southwark Alliance intends to review its provisions concerning personal financial interests as part of a wider review of its Standing Orders in the New Year. At the same time it questions the scope for personal interests to occur within the Management Group decision-making process.

12. Southwark Alliance believes that primary accountability to the public for public services should be through the individual organisations responsible for the delivery of services. While Alliance Board meetings are open to the public, it is in the design and delivery of services – the realm of agencies, like the council - that public engagement is most meaningful and important. Where the Alliance has a particular role is in developing and promoting good practice.

13. Nevertheless, the Alliance identifies a number of instances where direct community engagement is central to its work. These include the consultation process for the review of the Southwark Community Strategy and the development of Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives at the local level. In the former case, the Alliance has worked closely with the council's Community Involvement and

Development Unit to engage with a wide range of communities within the borough. In addition, officers have attended community council meetings to discuss the review. Generally, the Southwark Alliance produces a range of publications and other information, targeted at various stakeholders.

Southwark Alliance recommendation:

14. The Executive is invited to give a view on developing the role of scrutiny in respect of Southwark Alliance's performance management framework.

Scrutiny review:

15. The adequacy of communication arose repeatedly as an issue throughout the review – Members of OSC felt that councillors are not informed of Southwark Alliance activity in a systematic way, and that there are times when they become aware of issues and projects relating to their wards only when they are relatively well advanced and it is difficult to make an input. The key area where improvements are necessary is at ward councillor level.

Scrutiny recommendation:

16. **That the council representatives on Southwark Alliance formalise their role in feeding back to councillors, and that the leader provides an annual report back to Council Assembly, scheduled to take place before his annual interview with Overview & Scrutiny so that scrutiny members are able to follow up issues arising from that report in more detail.**

17. Southwark Alliance made no comment about the committee's second recommendation, seeing it as an internal matter for the Council.

18. However, sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the Southwark Alliance's response to the OSC report set out the arrangements for informing and involving councillors at the local level. (See also paragraph 34 of the present report.)

19. Corporately, the Leader and the Chief Executive are proposing a biannual report by the leader to the Executive on the work of the Southwark Alliance and an annual report to Council Assembly. It is envisaged that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be able to review the Leader's reports.

Scrutiny review:

20. The overview & scrutiny committee considered five areas relating to links to the democratic infrastructure:

    - Political representation
    - How Southwark Alliance relates to Community Councils
    - Clarity of roles
    - How Southwark Alliance works with small organisations
    - The role of ward councillors

21. The committee considered the question of party political representation on the Alliance, and noted a small sample of councils with varying political balances, all of which make provision for opposition party representation on their LSPs. The committee concluded that Southwark Alliance would benefit from a wider political representation in its membership.

22. The committee received evidence from Brunswick ward councillors which suggested that, while community councils provided the opportunity for local views to be expressed to the council, there was no similar route to decision makers on the Southwark Alliance side. Whilst the Alliance was strong on the strategic aspects, community councils had a good knowledge of local concerns and issues and were able to reflect local priorities more accurately. Dialogue between the delivery level and the Allicance was essential and should not rely on an organic link via the council leader.

23. The committee received views that the composition of Southwark Alliance may have led to a lack of clarity as to its role. It was not clear whether it was a voluntary sector partnership or a local strategic partnership and this might affect its ability to focus on influencing local public service spend, as opposed to managing the neighbourhood renewal programme. Councillors are elected and accountable to their own electoral constituencies. Community representatives are very often advocates for particular causes. There may also be others in the membership who have not been elected and are therefore not formally accountable, and whose remit was for one group in the community rather than its entirety. Perhaps the Southwark model had created the impression that these differing positions were of equal function and status.

24. The committee received evidence from the Southwark Group of Tenants' Organisations and Bede House Association, who welcomed the opportunity the Alliance offered to build relationships with the council and local agencies.

25. In respect of the role of ward councillors, the committee noted the interim report of the Commission on London Governance – "Capital Life – a review of London governance" – and the ODPM 10 year vision papers, both of which emphasised the important role of ward councillors as representatives and advocates at a local level. The committee was concerned that Southwark's arrangements do not yet seem to reflect this policy direction. The current arrangements lock most non-executive councillors out of opportunities to take part in partnership activities. The committee believes that better arrangements for non-executive members to be involved would benefit the partnership in terms of their gaining the ward perspective, and would allow ward councillors to fulfil their community leadership role.

Scrutiny recommendation:

26. **That the Council and the Southwark Alliance review their respective governance arrangements to improve the flow of accountability and decision making at both area and borough level. Overview & Scrutiny Committee believes that this must include a review of the number of places for councillors on the LSP.**

Response of Southwark Alliance

27. Southwark Alliance's response to this recommendation is set out in full at Appendix 2. In November 2003, the Alliance produced a protocol that sets out the principles and operating arrangements for the engagement of local people, councillors, statutory and voluntary and agencies, in the development and delivery of Neighbourhood Plans. It sees community councils as a key forum through which local residents' views and issues can be identified, and is keen to engage with them to inform its work.

28. The Alliance acknowledges the importance of involving key stakeholders appropriately in the issues with which the Alliance is concerned. Involvement can take a number of forms, including information, consultation and involvement in decision-making. The response to the overview & scrutiny committee's report gives examples of involvement.

29. In terms of strengthening the relationship between the Alliance and community councils, the Alliance stresses that it needs to work with all the main public service agencies working in the borough, including voluntary and community sector bodies. Consequently, it is not considered to be practicable at present to use the community councils as the sole mechanism for engagement at the local level. The Alliance also notes the considerable pressure on community councils' agendas and that this has sometimes proved problematic when seeking to engage non-executive members of the council and the wider community on what are often complex issues.

30. However, the Alliance acknowledges the value and legitimacy of the community councils and would be keen to explore further with the council how it can develop its relationship with them. The Alliance would welcome more specific suggestions from the council on how this might be done.

31. Southwark Alliance recognises the unique democratic legitimacy that local authority members hold and their community leadership role. It also acknowledges the political nature of the council's composition.

32. Although it is not possible to pre-empt the outcome of the upcoming membership review, the Alliance Management Group will propose to the Board that council representation should be increased to consist of the leader, chief executive and two other councillors (i.e. to increase the number of councillors on the Board from two to three). The process by which the two unspecified councillors are selected will be a matter for the council to determine. This is in direct response to the overview & scrutiny committee's recommendation that the number of councillor places be reviewed.

Southwark Alliance recommendations:

33. **The Executive is asked to consider how the relationship between the Alliance and community councils can be developed.**

34. The Executive is asked to give initial consideration to the Southwark Alliance proposal to increase the number of councillor places on the Alliance Board and to consider how the two additional councillors might be selected.

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

35. Southwark Alliance states the major focus of its work as, "to tackle the unacceptable levels of poverty and social exclusion in the borough. This affects particular families, communities and neighbourhoods…(The Alliance is) striving to close the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods, the rest of the borough and the country as a whole." Overview & scrutiny committee began its review in response to a feeling that it was not clear that this work was visible and responsive to the concerns of ward councillors and the community. The recommendations of the review aim to improve accountability, decision-making and public engagement.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – agenda & minutes	Town Hall Peckham Road London SE5 8UB	Peter Roberts Scrutiny Project Manager 020 7525 7229

APPENDIX A – AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officers	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny	
Report Authors	Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	9 November 2005	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	**Comments Sought**	**Comments included**
Borough Solicitor and Secretary	No	-
Chief Finance Officer	No	-
Executive Member	No	-
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services		

APPENDIX 1

Scrutiny report on Southwark Alliance: links with the council's decision making structures

Summary

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose the Local Strategic Partnership[1], (Southwark Alliance), as their major topic for review in 2004/5. This was in response to a widely held feeling among non-executive councillors that the work of the Southwark Alliance and its sub-partnerships is increasingly important in the borough. However, at the same time it is not clear that the work of the Southwark Alliance is visible and responsive to the concerns of ward councillors and residents.

The committee sought to reflect the complexity of the Local Strategic Partnership debate by considering both what is happening now in Southwark and how this rapidly changing area of government policy is unfolding nationally. We are grateful to all the witnesses who took part in our discussions, and we hope that this report will make a positive contribution to Southwark's governance arrangements.

The committee carried out its initial planning and scoping of this review at its July 2004 away day, and the scrutiny itself at 4 formal meetings between September 2004 and January 2005. Shortly after our last evidence session, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published two papers as part of its ten year vision for local government, "Vibrant Local Leadership" and "Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter", both of which are relevant to this area of local government policy. We have also drawn on an ODPM sponsored research report on LSP governance[2], and most recently "Capital Life - A review of London Governance", the interim report from the Commission on London Governance.

The overarching issue that has emerged is that of the democratic deficit around the Southwark Alliance – we do not believe that this is an intrinsic problem of the model but rather a question of working through how the Alliance should feature in the governance arrangements in the borough and correspondingly how the governance structures need to adapt to accommodate partnership working. Our experience as ward councillors and the case study presented to us concerning the Camberwell wet centre for street drinkers suggest that at the moment the Southwark Alliance and the Council have parallel structures with insufficient interrelationships.

The report focuses principally on the three main themes that emerged: the accountability and performance management arrangements for the Southwark Alliance; communication between the Southwark Alliance and the Council; and the extent to which the Alliance has developed linkages to the democratic infrastructure of the borough. There are some also broader points that emerged from some of the contributions we received, and while we have not been able to explore these in

[1] This report assumes a level of background knowledge about the function of Local Strategic Partnerships – full information is available at www.southwarkalliance.org.uk

[2] National LSP Evaluation and Action Research Programme – reports from themed learning sets

detail, we offer some reflections for the Southwark Alliance to think through as it moves forward.

We recommend that

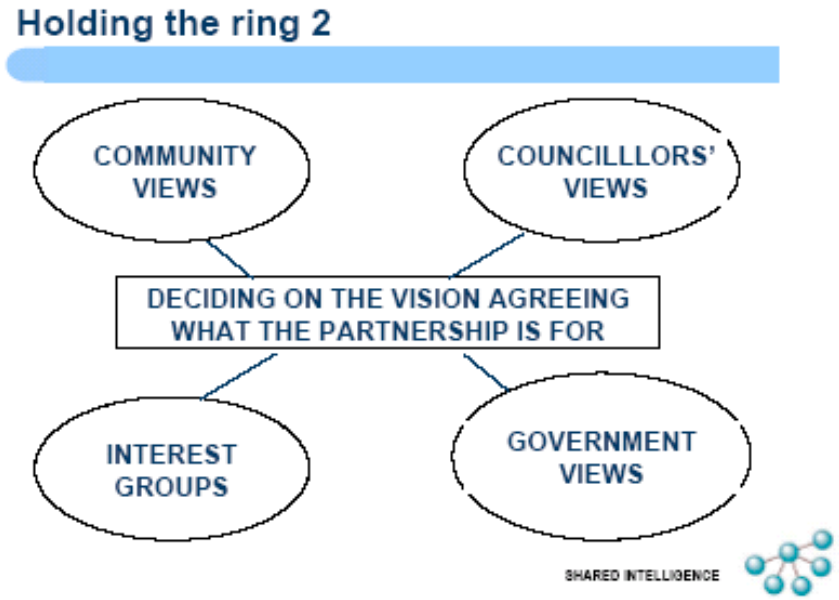
- **Southwark Alliance reviews its accountability arrangements both to its member organisations and as a collective body, and as part of that review looks specifically at the robustness of the protocols in place for decision-making, and instituting formal arrangements for public engagement with the Southwark Alliance as a whole**

- **the council representatives on Southwark Alliance formalise their role in feeding back to councillors, and that the leader provides an annual report back to Council Assembly, scheduled to take place before his annual interview with Overview and Scrutiny so that scrutiny members are able to follow up issues arising from that report in more detail**

- **the Council and the Southwark Alliance review our respective governance arrangements to improve the flow of accountability and decision making at both area and borough level. We believe that this must include a review of the number of places for councillors on the LSP.**

Accountability and performance management arrangements

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee began the review by exploring the accountability and performance regime for Southwark Alliance. A diagram illustrating the partnerships and their interrelationships in Southwark is attached at appendix A and at appendix B the performance management protocol for the partnerships. We reproduce below a diagram taken from Sue Charteris' presentation to the committee



This expresses the complex role and set of interfaces the Southwark Alliance needs to encompass.

Richard Wragg from the Government Office for London (GoL) attended the committee and provided us with an extremely helpful explanation of the performance management arrangements in place, together with GoL's assessment of Southwark Alliance. Southwark Alliance's performance had been assessed as green/amber, and the partnership was looking to strengthen this primarily through increased self-assessment. The partnership's focus was on delivery of the five floor targets. GoL undertakes quarterly performance reviews in respect of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

The committee's discussion with Mr Wragg and some of the members of Southwark Alliance made it clear that the performance management arrangements are fairly advanced and clear mechanisms are in place for regular monitoring of performance against the floor targets.

It was less clear how the broader structure for accountability works. We accept that this is a difficult concept – at this point in their development, many LSPs are in essence a back office tool for organisations to work together in the community interest, and Steve Tennison, LSP coordinator, pointed out that the Alliance has deliberately not sought to "brand" its activities but to retain the identities of organisations delivering specific projects. The existing accountability arrangements for the organisations making up the LSP therefore remain.

The report from the National LSP Evaluation and Action Research Programme (referred to above) proposes a set of questions that LSPs should ask themselves in order to develop their governance arrangements. On accountability, the suggested questions are as follows:

- ***To whom is the LSP accountable?***
- ***Are you relying on the accountability of each constituent agency, or creating special routes for accountability for the LSP as a whole?***
- ***Have you considered the possible tensions between different accountabilities? Are there any conflicts?***
- ***Have you developed creative ways to account back to agencies and the public?***
- ***Have you developed very complicated systems or a few simple rules?***
- ***Do they work well?***

We saw no evidence that Southwark Alliance has had a debate in these terms. It was therefore not clear to us whether the Southwark Alliance has made a clear decision to rely on constituent accountabilities or whether this is a default position in the absence of discussion, and we suggest that is a question the Alliance should come back to from time to time as it progresses its work.

As non-executive councillors we were not clear what the arrangements are for the accountability of Southwark's representatives on the Southwark Alliance. Some of the

organisations within the Alliance may have made more progress than the council on developing methods for ensuring accountabilities. For example the Chamber of Commerce and the Primary Care Trust both have arrangements in place for briefing within their respective organisations, although Lee Bartlett, speaking for the Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that maintaining dialogue with stakeholders represented a challenge in terms of both capacity and process.

We believe that this question merits further discussion within the council, and that we need to develop the role of both scrutiny committees and community councils in this respect. We also found indications of a lack of mutual understanding by Southwark Alliance partners and elected councillors of their respective roles, and we believe that both councillors and Alliance members must work to overcome this.

A further point that was raised with the committee was the robustness of its standing orders. Councillor Eckersley pointed out to the committee that the Alliance's standing orders did not appear to guard sufficiently against the possibility of mis-probity. Page 10 of the Alliance's standing orders [paragraph 19.5] contrasted sharply with the requirement on elected Councillors to withdraw from meetings in the event of their having declared an interest. Under paragraphs 19.7-19.8 other Alliance members maintained full involvement in decision-making despite any interests declared. LSP members were the key resource allocators and decision-makers. Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognise that Southwark Alliance is not a legally constituted body, but since it is making decisions on neighbourhood renewal spend, we expect that similar safeguards apply as those binding council members when they are making decisions.

This issue had also been raised in the ODPM governance report, which suggests:

We believe it would help if rules and contributions were made more explicit and were related to desired outcomes. Councillors, for example, work within stringent governance constraints: their behaviour is legally regulated and rule governed in ways that, for example, insist interests are declared to protect against fraud or corruption. There are some safeguards for the winder partnership in these rules – which could either be sustained by extending those sorts of formal rules to everyone in the partnership, or by leaving the power of "agency" with the council.

Accountability to the public

The discussion about the balance between collective accountability of the Southwark Alliance as a whole, and that of the member organisations, raises a further question as to how the Alliance can make itself accountable to the public. Although the full meetings of the Alliance are open to the public, there do not appear to be explicit arrangements in place for direct public engagement. This report suggests strengthening the relationship between the Alliance and the local authority community councils, but we believe that the Alliance also needs to consider its own arrangements for formal methods of public engagement, for example questions and deputations from members of the public.

We recommend that

Southwark Alliance reviews its accountability arrangements both to its member organisations and as a collective body, and as part of that review looks specifically at the robustness of the protocols in place for decision-making, and instituting formal arrangements for public engagement with the Southwark Alliance as a whole

Communication between Southwark Alliance and the Council

The question of the adequacy of communication arose repeatedly throughout this review – we have not surveyed all non-executive members, but all councillors on the OSC agreed that they were not informed of Southwark Alliance activity in a systematic way, and there were times when they became aware of issues and projects relating to their wards only when they were relatively well advanced and it was difficult for ward members to make an input. Both the Leader and the Chief Executive accepted that this was a valid issue and that more could be done to keep councillors briefed and involved in Southwark Alliance activity. We welcome this acceptance and look forward to progress. Clearly there is something of an overlap between the accountability points discussed above and the question of communication. The key area where we need to make improvements is at ward councillor level. We hope that the emerging area management framework will assist, but believe that in addition there needs to be proactive work on communication.

We recommend that

The council representatives on Southwark Alliance formalise their role in feeding back to councillors, and that the leader provides an annual report back to Council Assembly, scheduled to take place before his annual interview with Overview and Scrutiny so that scrutiny members are able to follow up issues arising from that report in more detail

Links to democratic infrastructure

Political representation
The committee spent some time considering the question of party political representation on the LSP, given the balance of the council. Sue Charteris explained that that initial Government guidance had listed the range of agencies to be included in LSP membership but there was no guidance as to final composition of the board. She suggested that the committee look at how political groups in other closely balanced councils are represented on their LSPs.

The table shows a small sample of councils with varying political balances, all of whom make provision for opposition party representation on their Local Strategic Partnerships.

Council	Balance	LSP reps
Bristol	Lab 31, LD 28, Cons 11	1 Lab, 1 LD
Coventry	Cons 27, Lab 22, LD 3, Cons 2, Soc 2, Ind 1	3 Cons, 3 Lab
Darlington	Lab 35, Cons 16, LD 2	2 Lab, 1 Cons
Enfield	Cons 39, Lab 24	3 Cons, 1 Lab
Tower Hamlets	Lab 33, LD 15, Ind LD, 1, Respect 1, Cons 1	2 Lab, 1 LD

We believe that Southwark Alliance would benefit from wider political representation in its membership.

How does the LSP relate to community councils?

The purpose of this scrutiny was to address the concerns among non-executive councillors and play our "critical friend" role in moving the debate forward. Southwark Alliance has grown and developed its role alongside the council's post-2002 constitutional structure, and we have reached a point where both structures are maturing but they largely operate in parallel rather than collaboratively. This debate emerged in the "strategic fit" challenge posed to the council by Inlogov's review of community councils in 2003, and in both the IDeA peer review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004.

The point was illustrated well by Councillors Alison Moise and Ian Wingfield, who came to talk to the committee about their experience as Brunswick ward councillors in Camberwell. Councillor Moise described how there was considerable local concern about street drinkers in the area, and both the ward councillors and the community council wanted to work with interested local agencies to find solutions. There had initially been discussion about a ban on street drinking in Camberwell and this had then progressed to a proposal for a wet centre, funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The discussions had been taken forward by a sub-group of the community council, with regular reports back to the full community council. On the council side, this worked well and gave all parties the opportunity to express their views as the proposal developed. However there was no similar route to the decision makers on the LSP side, and the LSP structures seemed opaque by comparison. Councillor Wingfield argued that a separation between the strategic and practical aspects was necessary. Whilst the LSP was strong on the strategic aspects, Community Councils had a good knowledge of local concerns and issues and were able to reflect local priorities more accurately. Dialogue between the delivery level and the LSP was essential and should not rely on an organic link via the council leader.

Clarity of roles

The committee also heard from Paul Wheeler, Director of Political Skills Forum, formerly of the Improvement and Development Agency. Paul Wheeler felt that the composition of Southwark Alliance may have led to a lack of clarity as to its role - it was not clear whether it was a voluntary sector partnership or a local strategic partnership and this may affect its ability to focus on influencing local public service spend, as opposed to managing the neighbourhood renewal programme. Councillors are elected and accountable to their own electoral constituencies. Community representatives are very often advocates for particular causes. There may also be others in membership who have not been elected and are therefore not formally accountable [or at least not in the same way as elected members], and whose remit was for one group in the community rather than its entirety. The Southwark model had created the impression

that these differing positions were of equal function and status. If this confusion of roles led to the Alliance not being in a position to pool together public spend locally, this would be a missed opportunity. He gave examples of authorities where the LSPs were smaller and he believed better able to influence local public sector spend.

How does the LSP work with small organisations?

We heard from Steve Hedger of Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, a boroughwide organisation, and Nick Dunne of Bede House Association, a charitable organisation in the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe area. Steve Hedger was relatively new to the Alliance but was optimistic about the opportunity it presented for SGTO to build relationships with local agencies. Nick Dunne described the concept of the Alliance as being somewhat abstract, and his interest was in how it might help Bede House work effectively at neighbourhood level, as his organisation often lacked a strategic context for its work. He appreciated the real sense of partnership between the Alliance and his staff, which enabled the Alliance to act as the backdrop to its activity. The Alliance's direction of travel, work, ideals and goals were manifested locally through its officers working in Bede House's area of operation. Dialogue between the two organisations usually started with face to face discussion with Neighbourhood Renewal officers. The first Neighbourhood Renewal plan had been developed from initial roundtable discussions to identify local need. The floor targets were present in the background and the process was dynamic. In terms of the level of interaction between the Alliance and local elected Members, Mr Dunne observed that Councillor Bassom (chair of Bermondsey Community Council) was very involved and he explained that he worked alongside Members and officers through the Alliance network. He observed a welcome coherence and saw nothing to indicate otherwise.

Role of ward councillors

As we were concluding this review, the Commission on London Governance published its interim report "Capital Life – a review of London governance" which proposes developing and strengthening the role of ward councillors by a number of means including the opportunity to shape policy through a statutory right to be consulted.

Similarly the ODPM 10 year vision papers call for councillors to be

at the heart of neighbourhood arrangements, stimulating the local voice, listening to it, and representing it at local level. They are vital in maintaining the link between the users and the providers of local public services (Vibrant local leadership, ODPM Jan 2005)

And that

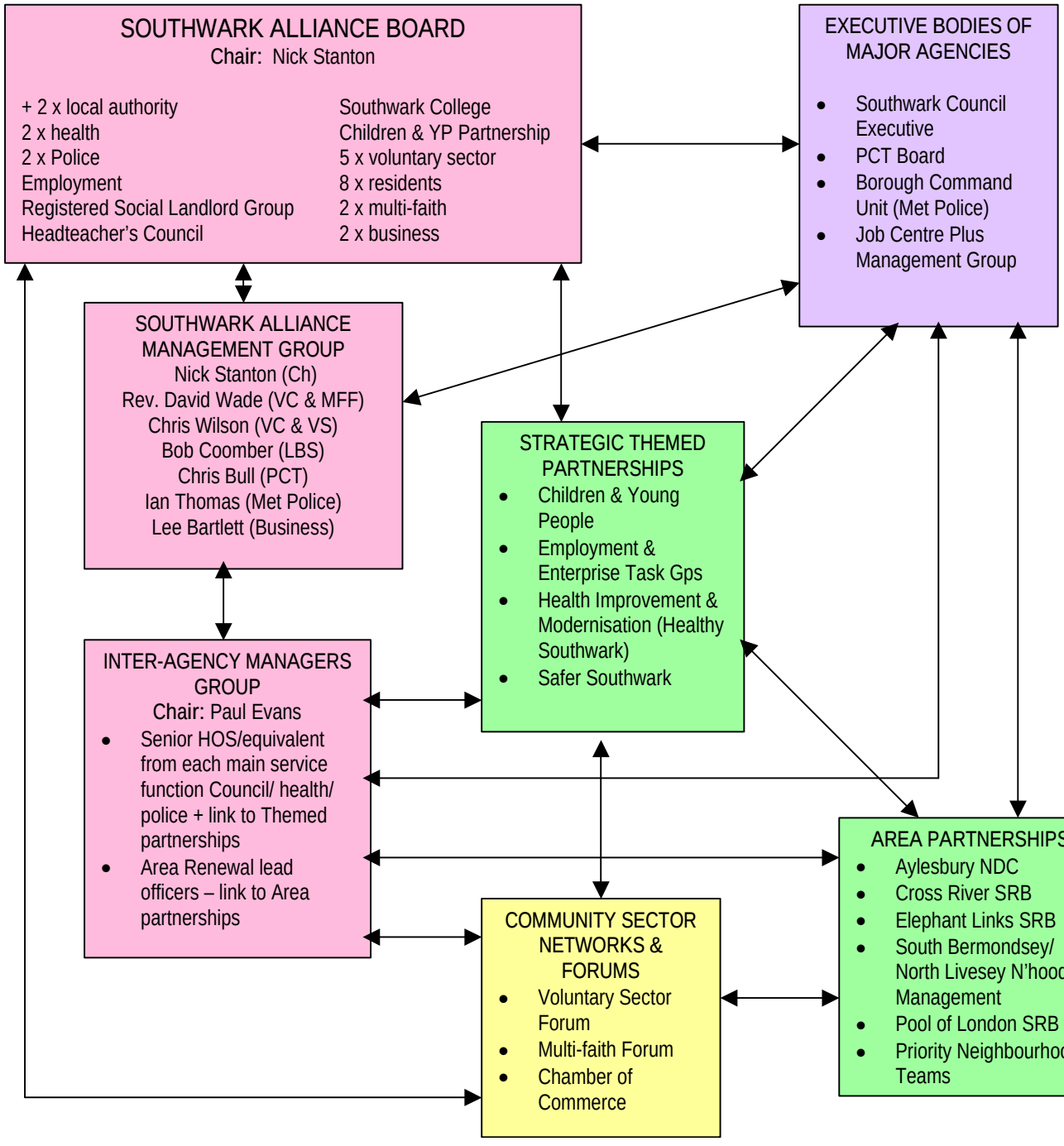
Neighbourhood arrangements must be consistent with local representative democracy which gives legitimacy to governmental institutions, and places elected councillors as the leading advocates for their communities, and with the requirements of local democratic accountability (Why Neighbourhoods Matter, ODPM January 2005)

We are concerned that Southwark's arrangements do not yet seem to reflect this policy direction. The current arrangements lock most non-executive councillors out of

opportunities to take part in partnership activities. We believe that better arrangements for non-executive members to be involved would benefit the partnerships in terms of their gaining the ward perspective, and would allow ward councillors to fulfil their community leadership role.

We recommend that both the Council and the Southwark Alliance review our respective governance arrangements to improve the flow of accountability and decision making at both area and borough level. We believe that this must include a review of the number of places for councillors on the LSP.

SOUTHWARK ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP AND LINKAGES



APPENDIX B

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF DELIVERY, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This Protocol sets out the agreement between Southwark Alliance, as the local strategic partnership for the borough, and the major Themed and Area partnerships and the Lead Agencies that have day-to-day responsibility for the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

1.2 This agreement codifies the roles, expectations and accountabilities of each body to implement the SA Performance Management Framework, including the priorities, objectives and targets adopted by Southwark Alliance (Annex 1 to this Protocol).

1.3 This Protocol applies only to the priorities, objectives and targets set out in Annex, and does not preclude each partnership and agency also having other priorities and performance management arrangements.

2. PARTIES TO THIS PROTOCOL

Themed Partnerships

2.1 This Protocol is an agreement between Southwark Alliance and the major themed partnerships, including the sub-partnerships that report or relate to them:

- Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (and any sub-partnerships including Sure Start and Connexions)
- Employment and Enterprise Task Groups
- Health Improvement and Modernisation Board (and any sub-partnerships)
- Safer Southwark Partnership (and any sub-partnerships).

2.2 It is intended to apply to any other themed partnership that may be established in future, and adherence to this Protocol will be a requirement of recognition of that Partnership by Southwark Alliance.

Area Partnerships

2.3 Southwark Alliance will seek agreement with existing Area Partnerships that they become party to this Protocol where their role is to contribute to the priorities, targets and outcomes of the Southwark Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. This applies to:

- Aylesbury New Deal for Communities Partnership
- Cross River Partnership
- Elephant Links SRB Partnership
- Pool of London Partnership
- South Bermondsey/North Livesey Neighbourhood Management Partnership

It will also apply to the evolving multi-agency neighbourhood and area management arrangements for other priority neighbourhoods in the borough. Where there are no formal partnership boards,

accountability is directly through the individual service managers and the relevant Area Renewal Manager to their employing body.

Lead Agencies

2.4 This Protocol is an agreement between Southwark Alliance and the lead public sector agencies that are subject to nationally determined Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets, including Neighbourhood Renewal floor target. And other agreed local targets that form part of the Community Strategy. These agencies are:

- Southwark Council
- Southwark Primary Care Trust
- Metropolitan Police (Southwark Division)
- JobCentre Plus (Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark)

Where a lead public sector agency has outsourced a major part of its strategic delivery of the objectives and targets to a third party organisation/contractor, such as CEA, this protocol will apply to that organisation as part of the contract requirements.

Non-statutory parties to the Protocol

2.5 Southwark Alliance will encourage non-statutory partner agencies and networks that are members of Southwark Alliance to work within the spirit and expectations of this Protocol, where it is compatible with their own aims and objectives.

3. ROLES, EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

3.1 The Performance Management Framework establishes the following roles for each of the Parties to this Protocol. These are set out in more detail in the Annex.

3.2 The role of Southwark Alliance is to work in collaboration with the themed partnerships and lead agencies to:

- Set the priorities and objectives of the Community Strategy and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- Agree the high level quality of life targets and success criteria for assessing progress of those strategies, taking into account the national requirements in respect of PSA targets and the local priorities of the themed partnerships and lead agencies
- Set the overall high level Performance Management Framework within which parties to this agreement will operate
- Determine the lead partnership and lead agencies to be held 'accountable' for overseeing the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of progress for specific priorities and targets
- Undertake an annual Performance Review in line with national requirements, by assessing trends and risks in terms of outcomes, the 'plausibility' of interventions to address need, to identify opportunities for and barriers to progress, and provide strategic guidance for further improvement. The Alliance will seek to add value to rather than duplicate the processes of the individual partnerships and agencies.

3.3 The role of the Themed Partnerships is to:

- Adopt the high level priorities, objectives and targets assigned to it by Southwark Alliance, and build these into their strategic plans, delivery and monitoring arrangements

- Advise Southwark Alliance of any incompatibility between SA objectives and targets, and those that the Themed Partnerships are required to or have chosen to prioritise, and work collaboratively with SA to achieve greater alignment as far as this is possible
- Take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of progress against SA priorities and targets assigned to it, adopting the SA Performance Management Framework arrangements as the mechanism though which this is to be done.
- Ensure that adequate recognition is given to delivering to the SA priorities and targets as part of the detailed service and business planning undertaken by the Themed Partnership and its constituent bodies.
- Work with Southwark Alliance to amend and improve delivery, where the SA Performance Review identifies barriers and challenges to progress, or new opportunities for progress, and where this is consistent with the main aims of the Partnership. This includes leading on implementation of actions plans arising from the Performance Management review.

3.4 In addition to the requirements set out above, nothing in this Protocol precludes Themed Partnerships adopting other and more detailed priorities and targets, and other performance management arrangements where it is necessary to do so.

3.5 The role of Area Partnerships is to:

- Take account of priorities, objectives and targets set by Southwark Alliance in the Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy in determining their own Delivery Plan priorities and targets, within the 'rules' for each programme
- Contribute evidence to Southwark Alliance and the relevant themed partnerships about progress in meeting priorities and targets at an area/neighbourhood level
- Demonstrate a willingness to review and potentially amend the Delivery Plan where the Southwark Alliance Performance Review identifies barriers and challenges to progress, or new opportunities for progress that could benefit the delivery of that specific area-based programme.

3.6 The role of the identified Lead Agency (ies) is to:

- Take the lead role in planning and securing delivery of the priorities and targets assigned to it by Southwark Alliance, working with the relevant partnerships and individual partner agencies
- Take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of progress against the assigned priorities and targets, adopting the SA Performance Management Framework arrangements as the mechanism through which this is to be done
- Ensure that adequate recognition is given in its own detailed service and business planning to delivering to the SA priorities and targets
- Work with Southwark Alliance and the themed partnerships to amend and improve delivery, where the SA Performance Review identifies barriers and challenges to progress or new opportunities for progress, and this is compatible with the duties and priorities of the agency. This includes implementing actions arising from the Performance Management review.

3.7 In addition to the requirements set out above, nothing in this Protocol precludes Lead Agencies from adopting other and more detailed priorities and targets, and other performance management arrangements where it is necessary to do so.

4. REVIEW OF PROTOCOL

4.1 The operation of this Protocol will be reviewed annually by Southwark Alliance as part of its annual Performance Review of Partnership effectiveness.

SIGNED BY:

Partnerships

Signature	Position	Date
	Chair, Southwark Alliance	
	Chair, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership	
	Chair, Employment Task Group	
	Chair, Enterprise Task Group	
	Chair, Health Improvement & Modernisation Board	
	Chair, Safer Southwark Partnership	
	Chair, Aylesbury NDC	
	Chair, Elephant Links SRB	
	Chair, South Bermondsey/North Livesey NM	
	Chair, Cross River Partnership	
	Chair, Pool of London Partnership	

Lead Agencies

	Chief Executive, Southwark Council	
	Chief Executive, PCT	
	Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police	
	Director, Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark JobCentre Plus	

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF DELIVERY, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This Protocol sets out the agreement between Southwark Alliance, as the local strategic partnership for the borough, and the major Themed and Area partnerships and the Lead Agencies that have day-to-day responsibility for the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

1.2 This agreement codifies the roles, expectations and accountabilities of each body to implement the SA Performance Management Framework, including the priorities, objectives and targets adopted by Southwark Alliance (Annex 1 to this Protocol).

1.3 This Protocol applies only to the priorities, objectives and targets set out in Annex, and does not preclude each partnership and agency also having other priorities and performance management arrangements.

2. PARTIES TO THIS PROTOCOL

Themed Partnerships

2.1 This Protocol is an agreement between Southwark Alliance and the major themed partnerships, including the sub-partnerships that report or relate to them:

- Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (and any sub-partnerships including Sure Start and Connexions)
- Employment and Enterprise Task Groups
- Health Improvement and Modernisation Board (and any sub-partnerships)
- Safer Southwark Partnership (and any sub-partnerships).

2.2 It is intended to apply to any other themed partnership that may be established in future, and adherence to this Protocol will be a requirement of recognition of that Partnership by Southwark Alliance.

Area Partnerships

2.3 Southwark Alliance will seek agreement with existing Area Partnerships that they become party to this Protocol where their role is to contribute to the priorities, targets and outcomes of the Southwark Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. This applies to:

- Aylesbury New Deal for Communities Partnership
- Cross River Partnership
- Elephant Links SRB Partnership
- Pool of London Partnership

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members

Fiona Colley
Stephen Flannery (till February 2005)
Barrie Hargrove
Kim Humphreys
Eliza Mann
Catriona Moore
Mark Pursey
Andy Simmons

List of witnesses

Lee Bartlett, Southwark Chamber of Commerce
Sue Charteris, Shared Intelligence
Nick Dunne, Bede House Association
Toby Eckersley, Village ward councillor
Alison Moise, Brunswick ward councillor
Mee Ling Ng, Southwark Primary Care Trust
Nick Stanton, council leader and chair of Southwark Alliance
Paul Wheeler, Political Skills Forum
Ian Wingfield, Brunswick ward councillor
Richard Wragg, Government Office for London

APPENDIX 2

Response of Southwark Alliance to the Southwark Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee, November 2005

0 Introduction

The Southwark Alliance welcomes the Southwark Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of its' work, and is keen to use the Committee's report, as a basis for improving its own effectiveness and strengthening its relationship with the Council. This response deals with the review's three recommendations in turn.

In developing its role within the borough, the Alliance has sought to work within central government guidance issued in 2001 on local strategic partnerships' roles, functions and membership. In addition, the Alliance seeks to take into account changing expectations from within government, such as those aspects of the ODPM's 10-year vision papers that affect local strategic partnerships (LSPs) and guidance on Local Area Agreements. In formulating the present response, the Alliance has consulted the Government Office for London, which acts on behalf of the government in relation to LSPs.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SOUTHWARK ALLIANCE REVIEWS ITS ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS BOTH TO ITS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND AS A COLLECTIVE BODY, AND AS PART OF THAT REVIEW LOOKS SPECIFICALLY AT THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE PROTOCOLS IN PLACE FOR DECISION-MAKING, AND INSTITUTING FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SOUTHWARK ALLIANCE AS A WHOLE

1.1 Membership and Accountability

The Alliance is at present reviewing its functions, membership and its way of working, in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the future challenges facing the borough. The timetable for carrying out this review envisages key decisions being taken early in 2006 and new arrangements coming into being after the Council elections in May 2006.

Whatever structures are agreed, the Alliance will seek to ensure that it continues to build productive relationships with all its partner organisations. This will include ensuring clarity about the accountability of the Alliance to its members and vice versa, and the relationship between the Alliance and the wider community of Southwark.

The relationship between a local strategic partnership and the autonomous bodies of which it is largely composed, must necessarily be one that is built on consent. LSPs do not have executive powers and are not direct providers of services. As the Alliance Standing Orders state:

> '*While we have no statutory or administrative powers, our goal is to influence the decisions taken by all organisations that impact on the borough, to ensure their joint efforts contribute to an improvement in the lives of the people of Southwark.*'

In practice, the Alliance relies on the seniority of its statutory and non-statutory sector members in their respective organisations to ensure that decisions taken by the Alliance are realistic, 'owned' and implemented. In the case of Southwark Council, this is often ensured by key strategies and initiatives (e.g. the Enterprise and Employment Strategies) being endorsed by both the Alliance and the Council.

The Alliance sees accountability as a two-way process. It is legitimate and right for the Alliance to challenge its partner organisations in a constructive way in respect of their contribution towards shared objectives. It is equally legitimate and right for people who have governance responsibilities for statutory and non-statutory agencies to challenge the Alliance for its decisions.

However, the relationship between the Alliance and its member agencies should not be based solely on challenge. In more respects than not, the objectives of the Alliance and the Council are complementary - indeed, are frequently identical - to those of the Council. There is therefore considerable scope for pooling resources for mutual benefit.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware that the Southwark Alliance, like other Local Strategic Partnerships in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund resources, has a performance management framework (PMF) that is focused on reducing deprivation and improving service outcomes. (The PMF reflects guidance produced by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.) Primary responsibility for the delivery of many of these outcomes (e.g. educational achievement; housing and Liveability) lies with the Council. The Council also plays an important part in the delivery of other themes of activity that are central to the work of the Alliance, such as community safety and health.

The Alliance would like to explore further with the Council the possibility of dovetailing scrutiny review programmes with the LSP performance management framework. That is to say, for the Council's Scrutiny bodies to carry out reviews in areas where service outcomes fall short of national and local targets.

It is also important that key stakeholders not directly represented on the Alliance Board and Management Group, including councillors, are involved appropriately in the issues with which the Alliance is concerned. This is considered in more detail below, in relation to Recommendation 3.

1.2 Decision-Making Protocols

The OSC report queried the robustness of the Alliance's Standing Orders, and contrasted their stipulations in relation to the treatment of interests by Alliance members with the requirements placed on Councillors. The Alliance is willing to review its Standing Orders in relation to such matters. However, there are significant differences between Southwark Council and the Alliance, not least that the latter is a non-executive body, and does not let contracts in its own right.

The main purpose of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund resources is to contribute directly to the core improvement targets of the main statutory agencies. Once the broad allocation of funding to various activity themes (e.g. health, education and employment) has been agreed, the Southwark Alliance Management Group considers detailed proposals from a number of sources, principally the borough's main thematic partnerships and Southwark Alliance officers, who are employed by the Council. The Management Group is empowered to agree, amend or reject such proposals.

There is little scope for personal interests to occur within the Management Group decision-making process. The majority of NRF is allocated to statutory sector bodies generally represented on the Management Group at Chief Executive level, or equivalent. It would be problematic for statutory sector Chief Executives - particularly the Council's, as the largest and most complex body involved in the Alliance - to withdraw from meetings on every occasion the Council has an interest in a particular initiative, without detriment to the collective decision-making process.

In practice, the checks and balances involved in the funding allocation process - i.e. proposals being developed in one part of the system and agreed by a separate group - have worked well. Nevertheless, the Alliance will review the provisions concerning personal financial interests in the New Year, as part of a wider review of its Standing Orders.

1.3 Public Engagement with the Southwark Alliance

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee report raised the question of how the Alliance can make itself accountable to the public. There is no direct analogy between a local strategic partnership and a public service provider agency, such as the Council. An LSP is primarily concerned with the coordination and improvement of public services, not their delivery. As a strategic body, the Alliance's role is therefore to ensure that there are effective 'whole system' engagement arrangements feeding into agencies, not to manage the engagement process itself. The Southwark Alliance believes that primary accountability to the public for public services should be through the individual organisations responsible for the delivery of services.

While Alliance Board meetings are open to the public, in many respects, it is in the design and delivery of services – the realm of agencies, like the Council - that public engagement is most meaningful and important. Where the Alliance has a particular role is in developing and promoting good practice.

To this end, it has established the multi-agency Southwark Community Engagement Officers Working Group, a senior body of practitioners to:

- promote good practice
- promote more integrated approaches to community engagement
- share information and skills
- act as a source of expertise
- act as a resource for borough-wide initiatives

The Alliance is also concerned with the promotion of active and responsible citizenship, and as part of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund Delivery Plan has established a Stronger Communities Steering Group to plan for the stronger communities element of the Safer and Stronger Communities mini-Local Area Agreement.

Nevertheless, there are a number of instances, where direct community engagement is central to the Alliance's work. Examples include the consultation process for the review of the Southwark Community Strategy, and, of course, in the development of Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives at the local level. In the former case, the Alliance has worked closely with the Council's Community Involvement and Development Unit to engage with a wide range of communities within the borough. In addition, officers have attended Community Council meetings to discuss the review.

The involvement in neighbourhood renewal issues of the wider community and local authority councillors is considered below in the response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's third recommendation. The role of Community Councils in relation to the work of the Alliance is also considered in relation to Recommendation 3.

The Southwark Alliance produces a range of publications and other information, targeted at various stakeholders. Hard copies of publications are distributed to voluntary and community organisations in the borough, via the main 'umbrella' voluntary organisations, SAVO, SCCF and Volunteer Centre Southwark. In addition, several hundred organisations and individuals are e-mailed publications and other information, via the Southwark Alliance website. The website itself has a facility for comments and questions to be e-mailed to the Partnership Manager.

RECOMMENDATION 2: THE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON SOUTHWARK ALLIANCE FORMALISE THEIR ROLE IN FEEDING BACK TO COUNCILLORS, AND THAT THE LEADER PROVIDES AN ANNUAL REPORT BACK TO COUNCIL ASSEMBLY, SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE HIS ANNUAL INTERVIEW WITH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SO THAT SCRUTINY MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO FOLLOW UP ISSUES ARISING FROM THAT REPORT IN MORE DETAIL.

The Southwark Council Leader and Chief Executive will prepare a separate response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on improving feedback to Councillors, and in particular, the OSC recommendation concerning Council Assembly and Scrutiny Members.

RECOMMENDATION 3: THE COUNCIL AND THE SOUTHWARK ALLIANCE REVIEW OUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS TO IMPROVE THE FLOW OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECISION MAKING AT BOTH AREA AND BOROUGH LEVEL. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS MUST INCLUDE A REVIEW OF THE NUMBER OF PLACES FOR COUNCILLORS ON THE LSP.

3.1 Accountability and Decision-making at the Local Level

In November 2003, the Alliance produced a Protocol that sets out the principles and operating arrangements for the engagement of local people, councillors, statutory and voluntary and agencies in the development and delivery of Neighbourhood Plans. This includes the following statement:

> *'Southwark Alliance recognises that there are many voices within any neighbourhood and that engagement is a multi-faceted process. The Alliance seeks ways to hear the voice of young and old, of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious communities, of those with families and those without, and those who are particularly vulnerable and socially excluded. No one group or one structure, however effective and inclusive it is, has a monopoly to speak for everyone or to determine what should happen.'*

It noted that in a neighbourhood or area, there are likely to be a range of formal and informal engagement structures, which need to be involved. The Community Councils established by the local authority are a key forum through which local residents' views and issues can be identified, and the Alliance is keen to engage with them to inform its work. Area Managers, working on behalf of the Alliance, frequently attend Community Councils that cover their portfolio of Priority Neighbourhoods, to give briefings and deal with queries about Southwark Alliance, the Neighbourhood Plans and the wider renewal agenda.

The protocol for the development and delivery of Neighbourhood Plans also stated that:

> *'as elected representatives of local residents, councillors are well placed to know and reflect the issues and concerns of local people. We would wish to encourage their input into Neighbourhood Delivery Plans alongside that of other bodies and individuals'.*

It is also important that key stakeholders, including councillors, are involved appropriately in the issues with which the Alliance is concerned. Involvement can take a number of forms, including information, consultation and involvement in decision-making.

Information - Councillors receive hard copies of all Alliance publications that relate to the borough as a whole, including Alliance Bulletins, Annual Reports and incidental publications. A number of other mechanisms for sharing information with Councillors exists at the Ward/local area levels. These include Neighbourhood newsletters and regular updates to Community Council meetings on the progress of NRF projects

Consultation - Councillors and Community Councils are consulted on neighbourhood plans. These are often supplemented by presentations to Community Councils on issues of local interest or concern.

Involvement - In a number of neighbourhoods, tours of NRF projects have been held for local councillors. In addition, area managers frequently hold one-to-one briefings with ward councillors on issues of local significance. In some instances councillors have been invited take up membership of specific neighbourhood renewal-initiated groups. Councillors have also sponsored and chaired public consultation

events concerned with aspects of the neighbourhood renewal programme. However, the extent of councillor involvement in neighbourhood renewal varies from area to area. Southwark Alliance is keen to build on good practice, and area managers meet frequently to share knowledge and experience.

3.2 The Southwark Alliance and Community Councils

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report suggests strengthening the relationship between the Alliance and the local authority Community Councils.

As noted elsewhere in this response, the Alliance has used Community Councils to engage with local authority members and the wider community on a number of issues. Two issues have arisen in the past, which merit further consideration. Firstly, as presently constituted, Community Councils are committees of the local authority, and are not multi-agency bodies. The Alliance needs to work with all the main public service agencies working in the borough, including voluntary and community sector bodies. Consequently, it is not considered to be practicable at present to use the Community Councils as the sole mechanism for engagement at the local level.

Secondly, recent experience has also been that there is considerable pressure on Community Councils' agendas. This has sometimes proved problematic for the Alliance when seeking to engage non-executive members of the Council and the wider community on what are often complex issues. (For example, it was not possible to have an in-depth discussion at all of the Community Councils during the first phase of consultation on the review of the Community Strategy.)

However, the Alliance acknowledges the value and legitimacy of the Community Councils and would be keen to explore further with the Council how it can develop its' relationship with them. The Alliance would welcome more specific suggestions from the Council on how this might be done.

3.3 Review of the Number of Places for Councillors on the LSP

As noted above, the timetable for the present review of Southwark Alliance functions and membership envisages key decisions being taken early in 2006 and new arrangements coming into being after the Council elections in May 2006.

The Southwark Alliance recognises the unique democratic legitimacy that local authority members hold and their community leadership role. While not a party political body, the Alliance also acknowledges the political nature of the Council's composition.

Although it is not possible to pre-empt the outcome of the membership review, the Alliance Management Group, will propose to the Alliance Board that Council representation should be increased to consist of the Leader, Chief Executive and two other Councillors (i.e. to increase the number of Councillors on the Board from two to three). The process by which the two unspecified councillors are selected will be a matter for the Council to determine.