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| <b>Item No.</b>                    | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>09/12/02   | <b>MEETING NAME</b><br>Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | A report of a review of the Public Disorder associated with the Council's Firework Display on Peckham Rye Common on 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2002. |  |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All  |  |
| <b>From:</b>                       |                                | Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee  |  |

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That no future firework displays should take place at all unless the Council can be better satisfied as to the adequacy of policing arrangements and communication between the sections of the Council, the Police, and others concerned.
2. That the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub Committee review the arrangements for any firework display planned for 2003 in the light of lessons learned from this review.
3. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) endorse these recommendations and forward the findings from this review to the Executive for information and consideration.

### ROUTE TO SCRUTINY

4. On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002, OSC discussed a letter from Councillor Andy Simmons asking for a short scrutiny investigation into arrangements for the Council's firework display held on Peckham Rye Common on November 5<sup>th</sup>. OSC referred Councillor Simmon's letter to the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee for their consideration
5. The Project Brief for the review was as follows:
  - To conduct a short Scrutiny Review into the public disorder occurring during the Council's fireworks event on Peckham Rye Common on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2002, with particular reference to:
    - The decision to host the event on Peckham Rye Common
    - Communications with local Councillors
    - The actions of different sections of the Council
    - Communication between the different sections of the Council and liaison between the Council and the Police.
  - To make recommendations arising from this review on arrangements for future public firework displays.

## **BACKGROUND**

6. On the night of the event, Police were obliged to close down roads surrounding Peckham Rye Common and invoke stop and search powers after gangs of youths began throwing fireworks at both spectators and Police Officers.

7. Councillor Simmons was particularly concerned at what he witnessed on the night from his vantage point on a number 12 bus at around 10pm, in particular:

- A group (approximately 100) of agitated young people on the streets;
- A man in his early 20s being mugged;
- The junction with Heaton Road and Rye Lane blocked with burning furniture and rubbish;
- The bus Councillor Simmons was travelling on coming under attack from around a dozen youths which included pelting the bus with fireworks.

## **INFORMATION PROVIDED TO MEMBERS AS PART OF THE REVIEW**

### **8. Why and how was the decision taken to host the event on Peckham Rye Common?**

The decision to move the event to Peckham Rye Common was taken under recommendation from the Police after a review of the fireworks display in Burgess Park in 2001, when gangs of youths aimed and fired fireworks into the crowd and at individuals, creating an unsafe environment for the audience.

After further consultation with the Police, Fire Brigade, Red Cross and Security staff, a decision was taken to relocate the event in 2002 and possibly operate a strict rotational policy, having the event in a different park each year. All parties were in agreement that this would be a sensible option and could potentially discourage anyone planning to cause a disturbance from doing so. It was also confirmed on all sides that nothing further could have been done to prevent these disturbances happening in 2001 and all possible precautions were taken. However, measures should be taken to attempt to relocate the venue. The Police positively supported the move to Peckham Rye Common.

### **9. Details of communication with Ward Councillors about the event**

As a standard procedure, an Occasional Entertainment License is applied for. Working with the Licensing Unit letters are sent to local Ward Councillors to give them the opportunity to comment on the event. In addition, an Events Officer met with Councillor Mick Barnard, on site, to discuss the event. Councillor Barnard offered evidence that the meeting with him was as a result of the "Friends Group" contacting local Councillors, who subsequently arranged the meeting which was also attended by Councillor Robert Smeath and Councillor Alfred Banya. Councillor Barnard confirmed that only one complaint was received by Peckham Rye Ward Councillors from a constituent in Vermeer Gardens. No other communication was received from any other source.

### **10. Details of communication between relevant sections of the Council**

Through the Events Emergency Planning Group (EPG) a meeting was convened on 17<sup>th</sup> October to specifically review arrangements for the firework display. Officers from the Events Team, Park Ranger Service, Licensing Unit, Streetworks and Highways,

Parking and CCTV, the Noise Team and the Green Team are all represented on this group. All departments had the opportunity to discuss arrangements and have input.

#### **11. Details of the actions of different sections of the Council in respect of the event.**

As a standard procedure in the planning of the event, the Events Team also had several meetings with the Licensing Unit to make sure all the conditions of the Occasional License were adhered to. This included site visits and the Licensing Officer completed a final check immediately before the event. Peckham Rye Park Management was consulted on positioning equipment, the fireworks display and the bonfire and was also on site at the event to handle any park based issues. Parking Officers advised on parking restrictions along Peckham Rye between East Dulwich Road and Barry Road. The Noise Team had no issues with the event. The Green Team provided the clear up afterwards and disposed of the remains of the bonfire.

#### **12. Details of liaison between the Council and the Police.**

As well as being part of the EPG, along with the London Ambulance Service and the London Fire Brigade, the Police have a large input into the event. The Liaison Officer is Sergeant Chris Andrews who, through the EPG and individual meetings, guides the Council on relevant issues. These include:

- Where and what time the event takes place
- What sort of funfair is required
- Emergency procedures
- On the day liaison.

On the night of the event the Council were in constant contact with the Police at the event through their lead officer and radio communication.

#### **Follow up to the event**

13. The Police have held a de-brief meeting on the event. At the time of writing this report the minutes from that meeting are not to hand. Officers are awaiting sight of them.

#### **EVIDENCE PROVIDED AT THE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

14. Councillor Simmons reiterated what he had witnessed on the night. The main substance of his concerns were as follows:

- The lack of obvious police presence to address the public disorder;
- The fact that Community Wardens do not appear to have been adequately briefed by the Police on arrangements for the event;
- That innocent bystanders and travellers were trapped in an extremely frightening situation with no safe recourse to escape it;
- That communication on arrangements for the event had been inadequate. For example, firstly, while Peckham Rye Ward Councillors had been consulted, Councillors just over the borders of the Peckham Rye Ward had not, despite an agreement reached with a former Director of Environment that they would be kept

fully informed and have input to arrangements and, secondly, that if there had been constant contact with the Police on the night of the event, how is it that swifter action had not been forthcoming to deal with the outbreak of public disorder?

- That the reasons given for moving the event to Peckham Rye Common were not sufficient particularly in light of the fact that it is open, common ground with no defined exit and entrance points and therefore difficult to police and, further, that Peckham Rye Common has a history of public disorder associated with these kinds of events which should have been taken into account.
- That in the light of a more general history of public disorder associated with events such as these, arrangements for policing should take more account of such an eventuality.
- That there were issues of the adequacy of CCTV coverage on the night.

15. Officers reiterated the value of holding public firework displays. When successful they provide a family and community focus, in a safe environment.

16. Officers reiterated that there is, at present, a *voluntary* code of practice in place on banning the sale of fireworks to under-age youth. No statutory code of practice applies. A mystery shopper exercise had been carried out prior to the event and none of the retailers tested had fallen foul of the voluntary code.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

17. Members of the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub Committee discussed the following points in support of their recommendations:

18. That Peckham Rye Common had proved an unsuitable venue for firework displays in the light of issues outlined in section 14 above and should not be used for such an event in the future.

19. That although the Council and the Police were satisfied that there was adequate communication, consultation and arrangements in place on the night, this had not proved to be the case. Accepting that it is impossible to predict exactly where or when public disorder outbreaks may occur, the more general history of disturbances attached to events such as these must mean that policing arrangements and communication issues should take better account of just such an eventuality.

20. That more fulsome and careful consideration should be given to the venue for future firework displays and one chosen with exits and entrances which are easier to police, as should be the surrounding streets. Further that any such venue should also allow access to the greatest number of public transport routes to allow members of the public to arrive and depart quickly, easily and safely.

21. That although the Council were aware that 26 Police Officers would be deployed at the event, the Council did not know in advance where and how they would be positioned. Information on the exact deployment of the Police should have been forthcoming. Further, the Committee also considered that the number of police deployed on the night were inadequate to address the outbreak of public disorder.

22. That Community Wardens could have been better briefed by Police on arrangements for the event, particularly in their role as intelligence gatherers prior to the event. **However, the Committee also made the point that if Community Wardens are to be present at events such as these their safety should be paramount and that they should be withdrawn from a scene immediately if their safety is at risk.**

23. That the presence of a funfair *may* have acted as a focal point for disturbance and that consideration should be given to removing provision for a funfair at future firework displays.

24. That all CCTV cameras in the area of a firework display should be in good working order so that CCTV footage is available and that CCTV control centres must be adequately manned.

25. That having had sight of the issues arising, the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Committee should now review arrangements for any firework display planned for 2003.

26. That the issues arising from the review should be reported to OSC as quickly as possible and that OSC should be asked to report the findings to the Executive for their consideration.

#### **ADDITIONAL ISSUES ARISING**

27. Members were advised by Officers that the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee has most recourse to influence the effectiveness of the Council's input to arrangements for public events. The Police and other agencies are not obliged to provide evidence or information to the Sub Committee. Nevertheless, because the Council and the Police are jointly responsible for crime and disorder through the Safer Southwark Partnership, the findings of this review will hopefully be reflected in better joint working arrangements in the future.

#### **NOTE: Legal/Financial Implications**

*Report authors are expected to cover key issues; however, where there are significant legal or financial implications, it is the report author's responsibility to obtain relevant advice from the Borough Solicitor & Secretary and/or Chief Finance Officer and include it in the final report in the section titled 'Comments of other Officers' (below) and clearly attributed.*

*Whether or not advice has been sought from the Borough Solicitor & Secretary and/or Chief Finance Officer should be clearly indicated in the audit trail.*

#### **REASONS FOR LATENESS**

The Chair of the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Committee requested that OSC receive this report at the earliest possible opportunity because of the concerns of the Scrutiny Sub Committee and particularly because OSC had referred the review to the Scrutiny Sub Committee in the first place. However, the schedule of meetings for the Scrutiny Sub Committee did not allow for an earlier review of the issues arising, therefore agenda dispatch dates for OSC could not be met.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS  
APPENDIX A**

**1. Audit Trail**

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>2. Lead Officer</b>   | 2. Maggie Sullivan                    |
| <b>3. Report Author</b>  | 3. Maggie Sullivan                    |
| <b>4. Version</b>  | 4. <i>Final Version</i>               |
| <b>5. Dated</b>  | 5. <i>06/12/02</i>                    |
| <b>6. Key Decision?</b>  | 6. <i>NO</i>                          |
| <b>7. CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b> |                                       |
| <b>8. Officer Title</b>  | <b>9. Comments Sought</b>             |
| 11. Borough Solicitor & Secretary  | 12. Yes/No                            |
| 14. Chief Finance Officer  | 15. No                                |
| 17. <i>List other Officers here</i>  | 18. Paul Cowell<br>19. Events Manager |
| <b>21. Executive Member</b>  | 22. No                                |
| <b>24. Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services</b>         | 25. 06/12/02                          |

**26. Note: Consultation with other officers**

*27. If you have not consulted, or sought comments from the Borough Solicitor & Secretary or the Chief Finance Officer, you must state this in the Audit Trail.*