



## **ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2003 at 7.00 PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)  
Councillor Gavin O'Brien (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Alfred Banya, Toby Eckersley and Lisa Rajan

**ALSO PRESENT:** Steven Griggs – Institute of Local Government Studies

**OFFICERS:** Sean Connolly – Head of Environment Development Team  
Ian Hughes – Head of Corporate Strategy  
Philip Murphy - Environment Development Team  
Peter Roberts – Scrutiny Team

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Alison Moise, William Rowe and Anne Yates and Dr Richard Anderson.

### **NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT**

There were none.

### **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

### **RECORDING OF MEMBERS' VOTES**

Council Procedure Rule 1.17(5) allows a Member to record her/his vote in respect of any motions and amendments. Such requests are detailed in the following Minutes. Should a Member's vote be recorded in respect of an amendment, a copy of the amendment may be found in the Minute file and is available for public inspection.

The Sub-Committee considered the items set out on the agenda, a copy of which has been incorporated in the Minute File. Each of the following paragraphs relates to the item bearing the same number on the agenda.

## MINUTES

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2003 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record; and
  2. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2003 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Paragraph 2.8 to read:

“Members were also concerned about the availability and reliability of data in respect of domestic violence. The Head of Community Safety responded that it was essential to develop better data collection by the police and across the Council and the voluntary sector.”

Paragraph 2.9, third sentence to read:

“Members also asked what level of funding Southwark was to receive from the Government’s funds for domestic violence.”

Item 2, resolution 4 to read:

“That the Head of Community Safety be asked to report back to the Sub-Committee in three months on how the Hate Crime Sub-Group has been organised to respond to the increased profile of domestic violence issues and the Domestic Violence Support Worker be asked to comment on her work in this context.”

### **1. COMMUNITY COUNCILS – REPORT OF THE INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES**

- 1.1 Steven Griggs outlined the initial findings of the Institute of Local Government Studies’ review of Community Councils in Southwark. He stressed that Community Councils were generally perceived to be working well but that Southwark was now at a point when it had to address the purpose of the Councils and their fit into other structures and the Council’s wider vision and strategies. Representation had to be balanced against participation.
- 1.2 Members asked if it had been possible to collect information on why people did not attend meetings of the Community Councils. Steven Griggs identified the need to improve publicity and that this was a particular issue when venues moved within an area. Changing of venues also meant that tracking of decisions was difficult as a different group of people might be attending each meeting. The areas of Community Councils could not necessarily define natural communities. Steven Griggs also commented that attendance reflected differing interest in particular issues.

- 1.3 Members suggested that a way to facilitate links to the community would be to co-opt representatives of voluntary and community groups.
- 1.4 Members queried the comments in paragraph 6.16 of the report, Perception of the Council, in respect of political debates. Steven Griggs clarified that it was important that debate took place within certain parameters and that any tensions were appropriately contained.
- 1.5 Steven Griggs identified planning as an issue that required consideration. Different authorities placed the planning function with different bodies and Councillors held a range of opinions as to where planning issues should be decided. There was also debate as to whether appointment of school governors should be a function of Community Councils. Members of the Sub-Committee indicated that discussion could also be held in respect of further delegation of budgets, for example in the field of environmental management. Steven Griggs indicated that this had not been identified by the review but was an issue of choice for the Council. The Sub-Committee considered that it would be useful to invite the Deputy Leader to its next meeting in order to hear her views on devolving further powers to Community Councils.
- 1.6 Members asked if there was Officer concern about the number of meetings and related staffing and cost implications. Steven Griggs indicated that a common issue raised had been the adoption of standard formats of reports so that information requested by several Community Councils could be coordinated, collated and presented in the same way. Paragraph 6.19 of the report addressed training and development for Chairs of Community Councils and Officers. The Sub-Committee considered that these issues should be progressed by Officers.
- 1.7 Members asked for clarification as to any proposals made by Councillors for links to Neighbourhood Forums, other community networks and the voluntary sector (page 29). Steven Griggs indicated that Appendix 1 to the report detailed all comments made and that not all these comments were definite proposals but rather possible areas for consideration. References to devolving housing management to Community Councils reflected one-off suggestions made during the consultation exercise rather than widespread demand. Links to the Local Strategic Partnership, particularly in respect of the community strategy, were more widely raised.
- 1.8 In respect of Members' questions relating to the involvement of young people, Steven Griggs emphasised that it was essential to consider the purpose of such involvement. It also depended on the purpose of Community Councils, i.e. if they were seen as decentralised meetings of the Council the membership and format was restricted. Consultation on particular issues relating to young people did not necessarily have to take place at Community Councils. The Council needed to be clear as to the function and strategic fit of the Community Councils.
- 1.9 Members of the Sub-Committee felt that the Council needed to be clear about the role of Community Councils in terms of improving services. The Sub-Committee agreed that a first step to considering the appropriate role of Community Councils and links with other bodies and the Council's strategic vision would be to collate examples of good practice within Southwark.

- 1.10 Members discussed the different roles of the Sub-Committee and the Finance & Economic Development Sub-Committee.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the issues raised in Section 6 of the report be referred to the Chief Executive;
  2. That a longer-term view of the role of Community Councils be considered, particularly fit to wider organisational strategy and practice;
  3. That all Members of the Council be invited to submit examples of achievements and good practice within Community Councils in Southwark, for consideration at the Sub-Committee's next meeting; and
  4. That the Deputy Leader be invited to the Sub-Committee's next meeting to offer a view on devolving further powers to Community Councils.

**2. DRAFTING OF QUESTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

- 2.1 The Sub-Committee agreed that all members and reserve members should be invited to submit questions to the two Executive Members. The Sub-Committee agreed to hold a pre-meeting at 6.30pm on 17 December 2003 to finalise questions.

**3. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 3.1 Noted.

**4. FORWARD PLAN**

- 4.1 Noted.

The meeting finished at 10.00 pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATE:**