



ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2003 at 7.00 PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillors Lisa Rajan, William Rowe and Robert Smeath (Reserve)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Caroline Pidgeon - Deputy Leader
Councillor Richard Porter - Executive Member, Community Safety, Social Inclusion & Youth
Councillor Richard Thomas - Executive Member, Environment & Transport

OFFICERS: Shelley Burke – Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Sean Connolly – Head of Environment Development Team
Ian Hughes – Head of Corporate Strategy
Adrian Rabot – Head of Community Safety
Peter Roberts – Scrutiny Team

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Alfred Banya, Alison Moise and Gavin O'Brien, 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

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2003 were deferred to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

1. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Councillor Richard Porter, Community Safety, Social Inclusion & Youth

- 1.1 *What can the council do as a key stakeholder in the Safer Southwark Partnership to effectively tackle anti-social behaviour?*
- 1.2 Councillor Porter indicated that the Council's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour had been considered as part of the Best Value Review of Community Safety. There were strengths in the current structure, for example the warden schemes and the youth offending team, and these were being built on. The Council was working with other agencies, particularly the police, through the Safer Southwark Partnership, in order to conduct an audit of anti-social behaviour and to develop an anti-social behaviour strategy.
- 1.3 *What plans are there for expanding existing warden schemes and implementing new ones?*
- 1.4 Councillor Porter reported that thirty-nine wardens were now operating, deployed across five schemes – Aylesbury, Bankside, Bermondsey, Camberwell and Peckham. A further twenty-four posts were being recruited to and it was anticipated that by the end of the year a total of sixty-six would be deployed, with a completely new scheme covering East Street and the Elephant & Castle.
- 1.5 *How can the Council continue to make progress in reducing youth crime?*
- 1.6 To date there had been considerable success in reducing youth crime. Southwark had achieved a 21% reduction in youth offending and a 12% reduction in youth re-offending. It was hoped to expand the Youth Offending Team (YOT) early intervention programmes and to ensure that the team was properly resourced. Southwark was on course to meeting the targets of the youth public service agreement.
- 1.7 *How are community safety issues being dealt with by the Community Councils and how can this be improved?*
- 1.8 Councillor Porter commented that the principal of delegating budgets to Community Councils, in respect of such issues as lighting and improving pathways, had been very successful. In order to determine the overall success it would be important to ensure that projects were delivered on budget and on time.

- 1.9 *How can the Council address the "fear of crime" and the negative effects that "bad" news stories in the press have on people's perception of crime risk?*
- 1.10 Councillor Porter stated that a poster campaign was taking place to give the positive message that general crime trends were decreasing and to publicise Southwark's achievements in reducing crime. Another campaign would be taking place in the New Year to publicise the work of community wardens.
- 1.11 Members of the Sub-Committee raised the issue of vandalism on buses, particularly scratching of windows, and the impact on bus-users. Councillor Porter indicated that he would be happy to take this up with Transport for London..
- 1.12 *What support is available for voluntary organisations in view of commercial rents for premises?*
- 1.13 Councillor Porter confirmed that the policy had not changed since 1991. Recently, two organisations had undergone rent reviews and their rents had been increased as a consequence. The Council was trying to ensure that all premises had proper leases and that, where the work of voluntary organisations fitted in with the Council's priorities, consideration was given to rent subsidy.
- 1.14 *According to the latest police figures and subsequent meetings with senior police persons, both violent and street crime is on the increase in Southwark how do you intend to tackle this?*
- 1.15 Councillor Porter indicated that extra resources targeted at street crime had led to a reduction but that this level of resources could not be maintained and that consequently the level could rise again. The Head of Community Safety commented that use of crime hot spot teams could lead to crime being diffused to outside the hot spot areas. It was important to maintain a presence in hot spot areas and review tactics around street crime generally. A lot of work had taken place to combat thefts of mobile phones. The Safer Southwark Partnership had created Sub-Groups in order to better tackle violent crime.
- 1.16 *Residents living in Russia Docks have asked why it took you so long to bring the police, council, YOT and other key agencies together to tackle rising crime in the area?*
- 1.17 Councillor Porter responded that he had met with the Superintendent for the North of the Borough and local residents a year ago and agreed an initial action plan. A subsequent meeting had taken place with the local MP and GLA member and residents at Southwark Police Station. A few months later a group had been set up which had looked at youth facilities and the deployment of wardens. Patrols had been increased and there had been a 25% reduction in crime. A mobile police station was located outside Rotherhite tube station in the Summer. It had taken from the first meeting a year ago to get the various projects up and running.

Councillor Richard Thomas, Environment & Transport

- 1.18 *Do you think that scrapping the parks rangers service will make people feel less or more safe in Southwark's parks?*

- 1.19 Councillor Thomas responded that one of the key aims in reorganising the parks ranger service was precisely to make people feel safer in Southwark's parks. The reorganisation addressed security and safety issues and anti-social behaviour. The aim was to provide a uniformed grounds maintenance service to look after the parks and to extend the Community Warden scheme. The new park wardens service would be in the same management structure as street wardens with all major parks having a team of wardens, supported by the street wardens in the adjacent area.
- 1.20 *Does the environment department keep records for missed collections of blue boxes and if so could you provide us with these?*
- 1.21 Councillor Thomas reported that from April to November, 700 blue boxes had been reported as missed (an average of 87 a month). Currently the Council collected from 23,500 properties per week so the number of missed collections as a percentage of total number of collections (assuming a participation rate of 30%) was 0.29%.
- 1.22 *Are you in favour of roadside emissions testing?*
- 1.23 Councillor Thomas replied that he was very supportive of road-side emission testing. He outlined the legislation within which local authorities could undertake testing and indicated that Southwark had received Department for Transport funding for a one year contract for testing. Southwark had two sites, on the South Circular and the Old Kent Road, and a service level agreement had been signed with the Metropolitan Police to provide cover for the scheme. The contract required stopping and testing of an average of 80 vehicles at each location every weekday until 31 March 2004, commencing late July 2003. After a trial period, fixed penalty tickets would be issued with effect from 1 September 2003.
- 1.24 *Do you believe that your Leader's "broadly supportive" reaction to the OPM recommendations for Education in Southwark will help the environmental cause in this borough?*
- 1.25 Members of the Sub-Committee emphasised that it was important to educate young people in respect of environmental issues. Councillor Thomas agreed that it was essential to help schools to teach about the environment and hoped that it would be possible to put together an environment in education development team. The Head of Environment Development Team commented that work was done with all schools in Southwark on a school-by-school basis.
- 1.26 *How is the new integrated cleaning contract working? How is its success being measured?*

- 1.27 Councillor Thomas reported that Southwark Cleaning had now been operational for eight months. The average number of highways of a high and acceptable standard had increased from 71% in 2002/03 to 88% in October and November. Feedback from Tenants & Residents Associations had supported this. In terms of fly-tipping, 94% had been removed within 24 hours of notification (in the last quarter) against a target of 92%. Removal of graffiti within 24 hours of notification was just below the 92% target. Councillor Thomas added that staff morale was good and that the transfer had been carried out in partnership with the Trade Unions.
- 1.28 *How is the Council performing on the removal of abandoned vehicles?*
- 1.29 The average time to remove abandoned materials was now 6 days as against a figure of 11 days for the same period in 2002/03. Councillor Thomas indicated that it was hoped to achieve a figure of 5 days. A Member of the Sub-Committee asked if figures were available for the proportion of cars being torched before they were removed. Councillor Thomas stated that the London Fire Brigade had reported a reduction in the number of non-accidental fires in vehicles.
- 1.30 *How is the Council performing on tackling fly tipping and are new strategies being implemented?*
- 1.31 Councillor Thomas referred to the figures provided at paragraph 1.27 above. In addition, the number of incidences had decreased and legal action was being taken. Southwark was one of the few authorities using powers to pursue fly tipping. Six statutory notices had been issued requiring occupiers of land affected by fly tipping to clear the waste – all notices had been complied with. By March 2004 Southwark hoped to have prosecuted 100 enviro-criminals. Recently, funding had been secured from the Home Office to purchase two motorcycles with CCTV and a multi-purpose van fitted with CCTV.
- 1.32 *What progress are we making towards tripling Southwark's recycling rates?*
- 1.33 The recycling/composting rate for November 2003 was 7.76% compared to the out-turn figure of 3.6% for 2001/02. The target to triple recycling by 2005/06 was on track. Planned new initiatives included rationalisation of the current bring facilities, introduction of a door to door seasonal green waste collection service and the addition of cans and glass to the blue box scheme.
- 1.34 *Where is your department on the waste management strategy – especially as action is needed soon as the lead times are so long to achieve any real change in our management of waste?*
- 1.35 Councillor Thomas reported that the Executive had approved the Waste Management Strategy on 2 December 2003. The Council's recently produced Unitary Development Plan had designated a site for waste purposes on the Old Kent Road. A bidders conference had taken place the day before, presenting the Council's four favoured options to key people in the waste sector. In response to further questions, Councillor Thomas stated that it was envisaged that a waste management contract would ultimately be signed by late 2006.

- 1.36 *Please provide details on the roll-out of street leaders?*
- 1.37 Councillor Thomas indicated that there were currently 153 street leaders and that further roll-out was subject to a growth budget bid. Funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund would run out at the end of 2004/05 and a subsequent bid would have to be made.
- 1.38 *Please provide details as to the success or otherwise of blue box collections outside of Dulwich?*
- 1.39 Councillor Thomas stated that the current participation rate was approximately 30%. It was hoped that a forthcoming publicity and education programme and addition of glass and cans to the scheme would ensure that participation throughout the borough increased.
- 1.40 *What progress has there been towards making Southwark free of:*
- a) Graffiti and*
 - b) Flyposting*
- Including sites over which the council has no direct ownership?*
- 1.41 Councillor Thomas referred to the figures given earlier (paragraph 1.27). In terms of discouraging graffiti, the Waste Management Service had recently launched a “shop them and stop them” campaign offering rewards for information leading to the prosecution of three very active taggers in the borough. Prosecution could be imminent on two of the taggers. In response to Members’ questions, Councillor Thomas explained that wardens were able to remove some graffiti and that the remained was removed by special teams. Members asked for specific graffiti in Peckham to be assessed and removed. In terms of clearance of graffiti from sites not under Council ownership, clearance was undertaken free following receipt of a damage disclaimer.
- 1.42 The Waste Management Service was continuing with its approach to combating fly posting, successfully prosecuting offenders and recouping remediation costs of up to £80,000 since the commencement of the scheme in 2002.
- 1.43 Councillor Thomas provided figures relating to the cleanliness index. On streets, this had increased from 64 in 202/03 to 65.12 in the previous quarter, and on estates from 64 to 66.10 (maximum score: 75).

2. COMMUNITY COUNCILS (see pages 6 – 33)

- 2.1 Councillor Caroline Pidgeon, Deputy Leader, had been invited to the meeting to offer a view on devolving further powers to Community Councils. She welcomed the Inlogov report. She emphasised that, as part of strategic fit, the link between Community Councils and the Executive and the Scrutiny function needed to be clarified, in order for Community Councils to effectively feed into the other parts of the Council. It was important that links also be established outside the Council to ensure that relevant organisations were engaged and that work was not being duplicated. In addition, Councillor Pidgeon was keen that schools be more involved.
- 2.2 Councillor Pidgeon commented that devolving specific capital spends to the Community Councils had proved popular and, if possible, should be continued. In the future, consideration could also be given to including some revenue expenditure. Members of the Sub-Committee indicated that discussion should be held in respect of further delegation of budgets, for example in the field of environmental management. Members considered that the Executive should continue the current budgets delegated to Community Councils into 2004 and also agreed that the Executive be recommended to extend delegation to include an amount of revenue budget in appropriate pilot Community Councils.
- 2.3 The Inlogov report had 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. Members of the Sub-Committee felt that the experience of considering planning applications had been different in each Community Council. As Community Councils had only been undertaking this function for six months it was felt that it was difficult to assess what had been achieved but that, ultimately, performance in terms of turn around times of applications and numbers of appeals would be important.
- 2.4 The Sub-Committee was concerned that it was widely felt in the community that, at some point, housing management would be devolved to Community Councils. The Deputy Leader was asked to confirm her views on this and she indicated that there was no such proposal. However, the Sub-Committee considered that it was important for the Executive to make a clear statement as to its position on this issue.
- 2.5 Members of the Sub-Committee suggested that at some time in the future a debate would be necessary on the creation of Area Managers to coordinate the work of Community Councils.
- 2.6 Members of the Sub-Committee also highlighted that it might be necessary to review the terms of reference of the Community Councils to ensure that the range of their work did not become too wide and therefore unmanageable.
- 2.7 Taking account of the discussion at their meeting on 19 November, when the Inlogov report was presented, the Sub-Committee -

RESOLVED:

1. That the Executive consider a wider Member debate on the issues of "strategic fit" as set out in the Inlogov report, and report back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2004 with firm proposals (for review by Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee);
2. That the Executive consider areas for further delegation to Community Councils, possibly to include traffic calming measures and roads maintenance, and pilot any further delegation in appropriate Community Council areas in 2004/2005;
3. That, to support this, the Executive consider delegation of additional capital budgets and of specific revenue budgets in 2004/2005, and make appropriate provisions in the budget;
4. That any further delegation exclude the management of Council housing and that the Executive confirm their general position on this; and
5. That the Chief Executive provides a report on progress in addressing issues in respect of management of Community Council meetings, resourcing and Officer support (Section 6 of the Inlogov report).

3. PENALTIES AND PROSECUTIONS - SCOPING

3.1 Deferred.

4. WORK PROGRAMME (see page 1)

4.1 The Sub-Committee agreed to include in its work programme a future scrutiny on the Management and Maintenance of Southwark Cemeteries.

6. FORWARD PLAN (see page 2)

6.1 Noted.

The meeting finished at 9.55 pm.

CHAIR:

DATE: