



ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2004 at 7.00 PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillor David Bradbury
Councillor David Hubber

OFFICERS: Shelley Burke – Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Gill Davies – Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure
Rachel Prosser – Legal Services
Angela D’Urso – Corporate Strategy
Peter Roberts – Scrutiny Team

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Geoff Gostt (London Borough of Bromley)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Glover.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT

There were no urgent items.

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: That the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 October 2004 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

1. COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EQUALITIES, CULTURE & SPORT

- 1.1 *How do you see your role as Executive member for Equalities, Culture & Sport making a difference to the quality of life in this borough?*
- 1.2 Councillor Blango responded that Southwark's vision for equalities and social cohesion was firmly embedded and geared towards improving quality of life in the borough. He indicated that as Mayor in the previous year he had been privileged to see a lot of the good work done in the borough. As Executive Member he saw his role as providing community leadership, direction and support to help achieve the Council's broad vision in Southwark.
- 1.3 Councillor Blango stated that a range of mechanisms were now in place including the pathfinder scheme, equalities action plan, and the drugs and alcohol action team. He welcomed the Lord Ouseley review and acknowledged that the MORI review had shown differences in perceptions of racial cohesion across the borough. Members of the Sub-Committee asked to be circulated with the MORI statistics.
- 1.4 *What progress is being made on the long-term relationship with Fusion as Southwark's preferred leisure partner?*
- 1.5 *What progress is being made on bringing back the Surry Docks Watersports Centre into proper use and enhancing its leisure offer?*
- 1.6 *Given the out-dated and unsatisfactory condition of the Camberwell Baths what will be the cost of creating a modern leisure facility and where will the resources come from?*
- 1.7 Councillor Blango responded that, apart from the Peckham Pulse that was now over five years old, the Council's Leisure Centres had suffered from a severe lack of capital investment for more than fifteen years. Reduction in revenue support over those years had also meant that essential repairs and maintenance work had not been undertaken. Some of the latter had been addressed in the last three years (mainly to deal with health and safety) but the centres still required a long-term investment of up to £25 million to bring them anywhere near the standard that residents of the borough deserved. Investment would provide facilities which were of high quality and capable of delivering a full choice of activities to a range of customers and included the capacity to generate the very necessary levels of cross-subsidy which made activities affordable to the vast majority of residents. Ensuring that this large and long-needed investment programme was properly structured and delivered was taking time and should be resolved early in 2005.

- 1.8 Councillor Blango explained that the Surrey Docks Watersports Centre and Camberwell Baths were in exactly the same position as the other centres (years of capital neglect and revenue starvation) and were part of the same negotiations with Fusion. Surrey Docks Watersports Centre needed an investment of up to £1million in order to modernise the centre, upgrade the fleet and host a first class programme of training and other activities. In the case of Camberwell, the investment required was in the region of £6million.
- 1.9 In response to further questions, Councillor Blango indicated that it was important to do better than simply repair facilities and instead to bring them up to an appropriate standard. It was necessary to discuss with Fusion the possibility of investment. In respect of the Watersports Centre, Councillor Blango stated that people living in the area would be fully consulted. Members of the Sub-Committee emphasised that it was important to develop a strategy for the area as a whole. The Director of Environment & Leisure explained that various issues needed to be considered together, including the water sports centre and the marina, general water management and management of the infrastructure.

2. COUNCILLOR GAVIN O'BRIEN – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 2.1 *Why do you think that the Council are still not meeting their target for the time taken to remove abandoned vehicles?*
- 2.2 Councillor O'Brien commented that the figure of 3.85 days that was currently published via monthly statistics included all voluntary surrenders. As it could take up to 12 days to receive the required documentation from vehicle owners, these vehicles could distort the reported figure. If these vehicles were removed from the calculation, the average time to remove vehicles was 3 days, which met the Council's target for removal.
- 2.3 Councillor O'Brien stressed that the service was now more proactive and hoped to carry out its first prosecution within the next six months. Members of the Sub-Committee asked for more detailed figures in the future in order to identify to direction of trends.
- 2.4 *Could you explain to Members what the Home Office Together Action Area announcement means? And do you agree with me that the current trend of publicising funding awards in the press without briefing Members as to what it is about is regrettable and not good practice?*
- 2.5 Councillor O'Brien reported that, over the last 12 months, Southwark had been working with a larger number of areas than the 10 Trailblazers and would be cementing these partnerships by announcing them as TOGETHER Action Areas in October. The Council was also conscious that there might be other areas that wanted to be TOGETHER Action Areas, whether now or at some time in the future. TOGETHER Action Areas would be asked to do the following:

- commit to constantly tackling anti-social behaviour, and to putting the needs of the law-abiding majority first;
 - identify the 50 worst anti-social behaviour cases in their area;
 - implement an action plan designed to address these cases and the problem more widely; and
 - develop and implement a communications strategy.
- 2.6 In response to Members' questions, Councillor O'Brien explained that there had been no Member briefing to date as the Home Office had embargoed the initiative for press release until only recently. It was as yet unclear whether there would be additional resources available. The Sub-Committee asked to receive more information as soon as possible.
- 2.7 *In the New Year the Mayor of London will be announcing the next tranche of Neighbourhood Policing. In which Wards does the Executive Member anticipate that these officers will be based and what will be your criteria in helping to decide their deployment?*
- 2.8 Councillor O'Brien responded that four Safer Neighbourhood teams had been introduced in Southwark - in Faraday, Surrey Docks, Camberwell Green and The Lane. The next phase of the project was to implement a further four teams by the end of the current financial year. There were no set criteria for selection of the wards, however, it was reasonable to assume that those wards that suffered the most crime and/or anti-social behaviour should have first call on resources.
- 2.9 Councillor O'Brien emphasised that it was crucial to consult with Southwark's partners as to which ward to select, although the final decision remained with the Borough Commander. Stakeholders included Chief Officers within the Council, Chairs of the Community Councils, and the Police & Community Consultative Group.
- 2.10 *What steps did Southwark Council take towards making the Fireworks period a safe and enjoyable one for everyone?*
- 2.11 Councillor O'Brien reported that last year the lowest number of recorded incidents ever had been achieved as a result of a successful multi agency approach involving officers from the:
- Metropolitan Police
 - Environment and Leisure Department
 - Community Warden Service
 - Housing Department
 - Fire Brigade
 - Trading Standards Officers
 - Event Management Officers
 - Parks Officers

These officers co-ordinated a programme of preventative measures in the lead up to Bonfire night as well as providing a command and control unit on Guy Fawkes night itself.

- 2.12 Councillor O'Brien indicated that this year's programme had sought to build on the success of last year's initiative, which had attracted interest from many other local authorities and borough councils. The programme involved the same agencies as above and a series of meetings had begun in mid-summer with a view to replicating last year's programme but also to widening coverage to include the whole borough.
- 2.13 Following the initial meetings a number of key decisions and commitments were made:
- One official display – at Southwark Park
 - All Community Wardens Teams to be involved
 - Police commitment for adequate numbers of dedicated officers to provide assistance.
- 2.14 The programme began with a series of preventative measures including the distribution of posters from the Department of Trade and Industry, which targeted young people and highlighted the dangers of fireworks. In addition, a programme of educational visits to local schools was undertaken. The Strategic Director of Housing wrote to all the authority's tenants and residents. Officers from the Housing Department also distributed and displayed posters. Trading standards officers monitored and visited premises of both authorised and unauthorised retailers of firework products, reminding vendors of their responsibilities and taking action where necessary.
- 2.15 Wardens, Parks and Housing Officers patrolled the borough on the following dates and times:
- Wednesday 03/11/04 – 4-10pm
Thursday 04/11/04 – 4-10pm
Friday 05/11/04 – 4-11pm
Saturday 06/11/04 – 11am - 8pm
- The purpose of the patrols was to locate and remove accumulated combustible material, illegal bonfires, and abandoned vehicles (particularly those blocking fire paths), and to report any actual/potential anti-social behaviour. The officers worked in close liaison with officers from the Integrated Cleansing Contract who had provided a bulk waste removal vehicle for each Neighbourhood housing area.
- 2.16 On Guy Fawkes night itself (and the Saturday following) officers from the Housing Department, Fire Brigade, Warden Service, Police, and Environment and Leisure department were based at Spa Road call centre. From this location over 50 officers patrolling the borough, or on duty specifically to manage any incidents, were managed.
- 2.17 The management of the period had been viewed as a success with a significant number of potential and actual incidents successfully managed. On Friday night alone, 51 incidents where an illegal bonfire was being built (47) or had actually been lit (4) were recorded. All these illegal bonfires were dismantled or fires put out.

- 2.18 The Sub-Committee congratulated everyone who had been involved in managing the period around Bonfire Night. Members recommended that, in future, Lambeth and Bromley Councils be consulted with in order to publicise the locations of events in the three boroughs and promote their accessibility for Southwark residents.
- 2.19 *How are the existing wardens schemes performing? And can you report on the progress/slippage of the new wardens schemes?*
- 2.20 Councillor O'Brien reported that the Council currently had schemes in Bankside, Bermondsey, Camberwell, Aylesbury, Peckham and the Elephant and Castle. The current schemes were performing very well against both Council and external funder targets.
- 2.21 The Rotherhithe scheme would be launched in November with 12 wardens, a Supervisor and Manager. The Dulwich Scheme would be street live in January 2005. The parks scheme would go live early 2005. The Council's Recruitment Open Day in October produced 197 candidates for short listing and these would be interviewed and assessed before December. Councillor O'Brien commented that a larger than expected number of applicants fell out of the clearing process.
- 2.22 Councillor O'Brien commented that also commented that the wardens provided a useful input into obtaining anti-social behaviour orders.
- 2.23 *Can you report on the performance of CCTV installation/monitoring in bringing down crime and fear of crime levels?*
- 2.24 Councillor O'Brien reported that in October the Council had tested a compact microwave system across the borough. Initial tests had proved satisfactory and the Council was able to transmit pictures across the borough with a 100% success. The Council was now in the process of costing this system. Once this system was in place it would enable the Council to deploy mobile cameras within a very short period of time to hot spots around the borough to help combat crime. The Director of Environment & Leisure commented that there had been a very positive response to the introduction of cameras in the area of the Albion Canal.
- 2.25 *Where ASBOs have been issued, are they working successfully, and what steps have been taken to enforce when they have been broken?*
- 2.26 Councillor O'Brien responded that 17 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders had been issued to date within Southwark. Of these, 60% had not been breached. This was in line with good practice figures recently issued nationally by the Home Office. In almost two-thirds of ASBO cases there were no further reports of anti-social behaviour.
- 2.27 Breaches of ASBOs were a criminal offence. Where breaches had occurred, the CPS had prosecuted these through the courts. The penalties handed out by the courts for these breaches had ranged from community punishment orders, to supervision and referral orders and up to a custodial sentence where the breach of the ASBO was heard with other criminal offences.

2.28 In response to further questions from members of the Sub-Committee, Councillor O'Brien commented that the new warden schemes would have an effect on ASBOs in terms of the information being collected. Measures were also being considered in order to publicise the action being taken in both obtaining Orders and prosecuting breaches. Members were concerned that there were some cases of anti-social behaviour where no action was being taken against the perpetrators. Councillor O'Brien indicated that he would take up any such cases if they were brought to his attention.

3. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2: QUARTER ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2004 [see pages 1 - 14]

3.1 The Corporate Strategy Officer introduced the report. Members were concerned that, if a performance target was rated as amber in the report, there was no easy way of spotting that it had been amber over a number of previous quarters and therefore needed attention. The report should identify trends and areas that needed to be questioned.

3.2 Officers indicated that they would look into providing additional historical information in the body of the report in order for trends to be more clearly identified.

4. CROSS-RIVER TRANSIT – INTRODUCTION OF TRAM INTO SOUTHWARK: SCOPING OF REVIEW

4.1 The Sub-Committee agreed to receive a short briefing from the Strategic Director of Regeneration at its next meeting.

5. FORWARD PLAN [see pages 15 - 19]

5.1 The Sub-Committee noted the Forward Plan.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2004/2005 [see page 20]

6.1 The Sub-Committee considered its requirements in order to undertake scoping of a scrutiny of parking. The Sub-Committee agreed that background information be circulated to all Members as soon as possible, including Lambeth's scrutiny review of parking, Southwark's Best Value Review and the draft Parking Enforcement Plan. Officers were also asked to provide statistics in respect of parking penalty notices and permits and information as to funding available for new controlled parking zones.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the following information be circulated to Members:
 - Lambeth scrutiny review of parking;
 - Southwark Best Value Review of Parking;
 - Draft Parking Enforcement Plan
 2. That Officers provide details of the general funding background to the introduction of controlled parking zones;

2. That Officers provide best possible geographical data for:
- Number of parking penalty notices issued;
 - Number of successful appeals against notices;
 - Areas where high numbers of notices issued;
 - Any areas where traffic flow remains a problem (or has worsened); and
 - Complaints re residents parking permits.

The meeting finished at 9.30 pm.

CHAIR:

DATE: