



ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on 21 SEPTEMBER 2005 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillors Eliza Mann, Dominic Thorncroft

OFFICERS: Sean Connolly – Head of Performance and Quality
Glen Egan – Assistant Borough Solicitor
Carina Kane – Scrutiny Project Manager
Robert Read – Unit Manager, Southwark's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
Guy Valentine-Neale – Housing Area Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors David Bradbury, Mark Glover and Lisa Rajan.

CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The Members listed as being present were confirmed as the Voting Members.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS AS URGENT

None.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

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 to an amendment, a copy of the amendment may be found in the Minute File and was 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 Environment and Community Support Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 22 June 2005 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Paragraph 1.2 – replace “Lambeth Council” with “Lewisham Council”.

1 RESOURCE PROGRAMME

- 1.1 The Chair reported that the report for this item had not been ready on time as further information had been required from the bidders on the Statement of Proposals. Instead of taking the item at an extra meeting, he sought the sub-committee’s approval to attend a meeting with officers on their behalf to go through the Statements of Proposals. The sub-committee approved this approach.

2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING [pages 1-10]

- 2.1 The Chair invited sub-committee members to ask further specific questions relating to the material that was presented in the report on performance indicators.

Noise complaints

- 2.2 Members sought clarification around the targets for the noise team and why 45 minutes was considered an appropriate time to respond to noise complaints. The Head of Performance and Quality first explained what typically occurred during a call-out situation; how it involved travelling time, monitoring to determine if the noise level increased again once the team had left the premises, and involving the police where necessary. The 45 minutes was based on the length of time it would take the noise team to respond if they were in a different part of the borough. There were four staff on the noise team, two situated in the north of the borough, and two in the south; Southwark was one of only two boroughs in London with a 24/7 noise team. The team was a discretionary service set up for residents.

- 2.3 Members asked officers to provide further information around the cost and measures for the noise team. Officers were asked to provide this information by e-mail, and offered to give a presentation at a later stage if required.

Community wardens

- 2.4 Members then asked questions around community wardens. The Head of Performance and Quality informed the sub-committee about their hours of work, explaining that they generally finished work by 10pm due to safety reasons. Community wardens were not intended to be a substitute for police, and their main roles were: public reassurance, responding to envirocrime and making links with the community. The level of warden presence depended on the need. Work was being done to ensure the role of wardens would be more responsive to the needs of the local community by considering where resources should be targeted. The criteria for warden schemes were set at both a national and local level. Not all members of the sub-committee were convinced that performance indicators were meeting the needs of the community, or that community wardens had any value.

Principal roads and footways

- 2.5 Members sought clarification about BV223 and BV187a. The Head of Performance and Quality explained that BV187a showed that performance was above target and just over a third of the roads required maintenance which was less than required by the target. This was partly because a review of road classification which reclassified some of the roads and footways. He also explained that aside from the funds set aside for emergencies, roading funds were prioritised according to road condition and usage.

Domestic violence

- 2.6 The Head of Performance and Quality also clarified that the “significant variance between the 2004/05 target and outturn (-20%)” for BV176 meant that the council had missed the target by 20 percent. He undertook to get back to the sub-committee with the reason for this.
- 2.7 The Chair thanked the Head of Performance and Quality for his time, and asked that officers provide an update on the council's performance with all the indicators identified in the report, along with a comparison of the previous year's performance, for the November meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That officers would provide the sub-committee with the following information:
 - a) The cost of running the noise team
 - b) More detailed measures around about noise and comparisons with last year's performance
 - c) Information on benchmarking work that had been undertaken with other councils around the noise team
 - d) The questions asked in the warden satisfaction survey
 - e) The percentage of people surveyed who responded that they were “satisfied” in response to the warden satisfaction survey, and ditto for those who responded that they were “very satisfied”
 - f) A list of the roads that have been declassified as class ‘c’ and the footpaths that were declassified to category 3
 - g) The schedule of planned roads maintenance for the following year
 - h) The reason for the 20% difference between the 2004/05 BV176 target for domestic violence refuge places and the outturn.
2. That the sub-committee receive an update on the performance indicators (except for the environmental health and trading indicators) for the meeting on 2 November 2005.

3 SOUTHWARK ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT [page 11]

- 3.1 The sub-committee received a presentation from officers about Southwark's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU). The presentation outlined the background, structure and functions of the unit, its approach to taking referrals and enforcement action, resourcing, and performance against indicators and other councils. New developments included 'Together Action Zones' with street action teams and police safer neighbourhood community panels, increased support for vulnerable hate crime and domestic violence victims, joint housing staff/warden working on estates and networked case-management database working for agencies such as the voluntary sector. Officers also distributed leaflets to the sub-committee; the leaflets were being distributed around the borough to raise awareness of the unit.
- 3.2 Officers were asked whether there had been a change in the level of anti-social behaviour in Southwark since the introduction of the unit in 2000. They responded that police data showed a fluctuation, but that it was not simple to provide an answer for two reasons. First, there needed to be a baseline level of anti-social behaviour to measure against, and both local authorities and the government were finding this level difficult to establish. Secondly, the definition of anti-social behaviour had not yet been agreed, for example whether the definition should include hate crime. Southwark residents seemed to believe that anti-social behaviour was increasing and it had been identified as a key priority the council should be dealing with.
- 3.3 Members discussed anti-social behaviour by children and young people on council estates. Officers said this was seen to be a real and increasing issue. The council now had more power and resources for tackling it and a variety of approaches were used to reduce anti-social behaviour e.g. making changes to the tenancy agreement, mediation between the parties or taking enforcement action where necessary. SASBU worked with partner agencies such as the Youth Offending Team to encourage the children/youth to find more socially-acceptable activities to focus on. It was easier to deal with anti-social behaviour caused by youth from other estates (e.g. by excluding them from the estate), youth who lived on the estate proved more difficult.
- 3.4 Members commented that it was important to work with tenant movements. Officers informed that each area office had an anti-social behaviour champion (either the tenancy manager or housing operations manager) who received training and attended regular meetings. Housing staff also attended TRA meetings, and anti-social behaviour was regularly discussed.
- 3.5 There was a discussion around anti-social behaviour and people who had mental health issues. People who had mental health issues were more likely to be the victims, and in some cases were more sensitive to everyday noise. Officers said that these were the most difficult cases to deal with and that SASBU needed to judge what was reasonable in each case, and consider what steps could be taken to support the person. Any action taken by the unit needed to be justifiable in Court. A member made the point that in many cases people with mental health problems had their own carer/nurse and that the unit should be working with these agencies to resolve the problem.
- 3.6 Members also suggested that referrals to the unit would be from people who knew about the unit and its role, and that more work was needed to inform private residents forums about the unit. Officers took the point, but added that intelligence from anti-social behaviour was obtained from a number of areas, including police and wardens. Information gathered from the new 'It's your call' phone line would also be added to the knowledge pool, and the information used to deploy resources.

- 3.7 A member queried whether police were taking anti-social behaviour seriously and committing resources to tackling the problem. Officers informed that police had a number of priorities, and there was police recognition of the issue. Safer Neighbourhood Teams were an example of a dedicated force set up to respond to anti-social behaviour and, while they were not currently in all areas of Southwark, the intention was that they would be rolled out across the borough. Police were unable to issue anti-social behaviour orders without involving the council.
- 3.8 Officers clarified the relationship between the Safer Southwark Partnership (SSP) and SASBU. SASBU had an accountable line through the Anti-Social Behaviour Group, which was accountable to the SSP performance group. SASBU was funded from both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account; how it was divided between the two was an issue for consideration during the budget-setting process.
- 3.9 Members raised queries about the use of CCTV cameras on estates. Surveillance monitoring was jointly managed by Housing and Environment and Leisure, although the council was trying to equalise the service provision and standards across the council. A review was underway of the CCTV cameras to determine their use and value. Officers also explained that in relation to anti-social behaviour there were two approaches to using CCTV – either use it overtly as a deterrent, or covertly for information-gathering purposes. CCTV was of most assistance to SASBU when it was used covertly.
- 3.10 Members highlighted the difficulty they had as ward councillors in managing concerns from constituents about anti-social behaviour. Officers said that cases were being raised and discussed in public forums, and it was difficult for officers to respond to these discussions because they were not at liberty to disclose details. Both members and officers were of the opinion that a framework should be developed which would enable councillors to have access to officers on a confidential level if they had concerns with how a case was being dealt with. Therefore the cases raised in public forums would be those where the councillor was still unhappy with the process. Members suggested that this would remove some of the mistrust councillors had of the process.
- 3.11 Following member discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That officers should consider options for developing a dedicated communication line or protocol between Councillors and SASBU to confidentially discuss anti-social behaviour cases, and report the options to the scrutiny project manager.
2. That, provided the information is not confidential, members be provided with a map outlining the locations of the CCTV cameras in the borough.

4. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE BUDGET MONITOR [Page 12]

- 4.1 Members commented that there was very little variance in the budget monitor for the Environment and Leisure Department. There were no major concerns.

RESOLVED:

That the Month 4 Environment & Leisure Departmental Budget Monitoring Report 2005/06 be noted.

5. WORK PROGRAMME [Pages 13-16]

- 5.1 Members made no changes to the sub-committee's work programme.

- 5.2 The Chair asked the Scrutiny Project Manager to continue to chase up actions that had not been resolved from the July 2005 meeting. He advised members that the press office had not been prepared to action the resolution from the July meeting which asked for a press release stating that the sub-committee was concerned about the increase in violent crime. He had not been consulted on this decision, and intended to take the issue up with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 9:35pm.

CHAIR:

DATE: