

<b>Item No.</b> <b>46</b>	<b>Classification:</b> OPEN	<b>Date:</b> 6 FEBRUARY 2003	<b>MEETING NAME</b> Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Scrutiny Publicity Protocols	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Head of Communications & Customer Relations	

### RECOMMENDATION

1. That Members note the proposed protocols for Scrutiny publicity.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The scrutiny publicity protocols are attached at Appendix A and will form part of a wider Member Protocols report to Standards Committee later this month.
3. The protocols have been informed by best practice from other authorities and aim to clarify the position on publicity for Scrutiny activities.

### LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. There are no specific financial implications raised by this report. The legal framework within which local government publicity must operate is contained in the protocol at Appendix A.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

### Audit Trail

<b>Lead Officer</b>	<i>Amanda Hirst, Head of Communications &amp; Customer Relations</i>	
<b>Report Author</b>	<i>Amanda Hirst, Head of Communications &amp; Customer Relations</i>	
<b>Version</b>		
<b>Dated</b>	<i>28 January 2003</i>	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	<i>No</i>	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Chief Officer Team	Yes	No
<b>Executive Member</b>	No	No

## **APPENDIX A: EXTRACT FROM MEMBER PROTOCOLS DOCUMENT**

### **12. Publicity and Information**

#### **Advice from Borough Solicitor**

Members need to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1986 and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity which prohibits authorities from publishing any material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. Publicity cannot be used as a means to publicise individual Councillors, except where they are acting to represent the Council as a whole.

The Head of Communications can advise Members on how to deal with press enquiries, and how to arrange publicity for events which can be properly publicised. Members should seek advice before releasing information to the Press which they have obtained in their role as Members. They have a remit to discover and make public inefficiency and poor public service: however they should be careful where a matter they wish to make public relates to identifiable officers, and seek advice from the Head of Communications or the Borough Solicitor & Secretary in those cases.

#### **Role of Communications Unit**

- The Communications Unit works on behalf of the council, not for any political party.
- The purpose of its work is to provide high quality information about the council, its policies and its services. It is also to protect and promote the Council's reputation, and to encourage participation.
- Publicity and information will cover areas such as why the council makes the decisions it does, and why other proposals are rejected.
- On items of political controversy, the Communications Unit will feature the decisions of the council – i.e. those decisions made by the council assembly, executive, scrutiny, community councils, planning or licensing or those actions that have been taken within the broad policy framework already set by the council, subject to any call in arrangements.

#### **Scrutiny**

Publicity about scrutiny will concentrate on factual information about which scrutiny exercises the council is conducting, who is involved, the process they will follow and the decisions they take.

Where scrutiny suggests a course of action that differs to or challenges one agreed by the executive or any other council decision-making body, we would make this clear – together with the process for resolving the difference.

Where decisions of the executive are referred to full council for resolution, we will await the final decision of council before conducting any other proactive publicity on the issue, other than to report the outcome of the scrutiny exercise and factual information about what is happening.