

## **Overview and Scrutiny draft Annual Report**

### **MAKING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK FOR SOUTHWARK: ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **1. FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR HUMPHREYS [Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee]**

1.1 I am pleased to present the first annual report on the new Overview and Scrutiny function in Southwark. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2002, full Council agreed the new arrangements and the resulting Overview and Scrutiny committees commenced their work programmes in June 2002. To date approximately 40 reviews have been completed or are in process. Although Southwark had piloted its scrutiny arrangements for two years, this was the first year of operating as a formal part of constitutional processes. This report describes the new arrangements, experiences, outcomes and some of the learning arising from scrutiny's first year of operation and highlights the key reviews and findings to date.

1.2 In the following pages you will see how Overview and Scrutiny is proving an independent and influential mechanism for ensuring that decisions made by the Executive and across the Council are transparent and accountable. Both Members and Officers are learning quickly and we are determined to make the function a model of best practice.

1.3 At the end of the report we offer a retrospective on what we think has already been achieved by the Overview and Scrutiny committees, recognising the threshold we have reached and outlining the arrangements we are putting in place for further improvements.

1.4 I welcome your comments on this report and any views you may have about Overview and Scrutiny in Southwark. If you would like to know more or find out how to be involved in Overview and Scrutiny please refer to the contact details at the end of the report.

#### **The process**

### **2. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS**

2.1 Southwark has one co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and six themed scrutiny Sub-Committees:

- Community Support and Safety
- Education, Youth and Leisure
- Environment and Transport

- Finance and General Purposes
- Health and Social Care
- Housing and Regeneration

(N.B. The sub-committees have changed around slightly for 2003. Details are available from the Scrutiny Team 020 7525 7238)

2.2 The membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Sub-Committees is drawn from all political parties represented on the Council. Each body meets monthly.

### **3. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES**

3.1 Members began the year by drawing up work programmes for the sub committees. They considered executive decisions that had been signposted, statutory plans due during the course of the year, the policies set out by the new administration, performance and budget issues, and matters of community concern.

3.2 The main Overview and Scrutiny Committee has played a role in agreeing the original work programmes, suggesting additional items, and hearing from scrutiny sub-committees on their final reports, and on progress against their work programmes.

3.3 Reviews to date have included working with partner agencies, particularly schools, the Police, health bodies and Southwark's Local Strategic Partnership, interviews with Executive Members, pre-strategy reviews, post-Inspectorate reviews and input to Best Value reviews.

### **4. METHODS OF SCRUTINY**

4.1 Reviews can take place over one meeting or several. They may be carried out within the Town Hall or elsewhere. The views of external agencies are sought and members of the public are encouraged to contribute. This may be by attending meetings to give evidence and take part in the debate, or by putting their views in writing. Scrutiny bodies may also choose to commission external expert advice or research, and to undertake visits to improve their understanding of the matter under review. This year, for example, committees have visited the neighbourhood warden schemes, a number of schools, adult day care services, and have visited other boroughs to find out how customer call centres are working.

#### **4.2 Call-in**

During the 2002-03 Municipal Year four decisions have been called-in to scrutiny, including aspects of Best Value Reviews of Community Safety, Housing Management and Early Years, together with a Chief Officer tender approval decision. In all but one of these cases Member concerns have been sufficient for the Executive to be asked to reconsider its original decision. In every case Overview & Scrutiny Committee has

recommended additional aspects for future Executive focus in respect of decisions called-in, which have been subsequently addressed through Executive action and resolutions.

## **5. THE ROLE OF MEMBERS**

Members take full ownership of the reviews by:

- selecting the topic;
- planning the scope and length of each review;
- determining the type of review required;
- projecting the outcomes they are seeking from reviews;
- choosing what evidence will be required and from whom;
- agreeing the recommendations arising;
- influencing how the recommendations will be reported.

## **6. THE ROLE OF OFFICERS**

Officers support members by:

- providing policy support for work programmes and reviews
- providing constitutional and administrative support
- providing legal advice
- providing professional advice
- helping to identify potential sources of information and evidence
- drafting reports

### **The Committees**

## **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Kim Humphreys – Chair  
Councillor Linda Manchester – Vice Chair  
Councillor Aubyn Graham  
Councillor Barrie Hargrove  
Councillor Eliza Mann  
Councillor Mark Pursey  
Councillor Andy Simmons  
Councillor Neil Watson

7.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides the strategic direction for the function and the work of individual scrutiny Sub-Committees. It ensures that the work programmes for each of the Sub Committees are comprehensive and recommends additional reviews to Sub Committees on occasion. It determines the future direction

of scrutiny including development and capacity building for both members and officers. It ensures that recommendations and outcomes arising from reviews receive due attention and publicity and it affords an opportunity for the Chairs of the Sub Committees to come together on a regular basis to share knowledge and learning.

7.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also begun to undertake its own reviews. It is currently looking at the Council's corporate complaints system and the capital programme overspend at Charter School.

## **8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Barrie Hargrove – Chair  
Councillor Gavin O'Brien – Vice Chair  
Councillor Margaret Ambrose  
Councillor Alfred Banya  
Councillor John Friary  
Councillor Linda Manchester

8.1 A recent MORI survey showed that crime and the fear of crime are top of a list of residents' concerns. The Sub Committee has the scope to review all the Council's community safety policies, partnership working with the police and other agencies in respect of community safety and the impact on community safety of other Council services and policies. In addition it can review all aspects of the Council's programmes and policies for supporting communities.

### **8.2 REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY WARDENS SCHEMES**

8.3 Community Wardens have the dual function of helping to reduce crime and reassuring residents about issues of safety. Southwark already has two Community Warden schemes in Peckham and Bermondsey and more planned for priority areas across the borough. Overview and Scrutiny Members went on a tour with existing Community Wardens to see how they were working, and to help Members develop recommendations about the future direction and development of Community Warden Schemes. The key findings emerging from the review were that the Council should continue to lobby central government for more enforcement powers for Community Wardens, as long as it is with the agreement of and after consultation with the communities they serve; that a standard recruitment process for Community Wardens should be extended to enable more recruitment of ethnic groups and women, in line with the Council's drive for greater equality and that all Community Warden schemes should have a strategic objective of fostering social inclusion and community development.

### **8.4 SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE SRB6 PROJECT BOARD**

8.5 The Council is one of a group of agencies working together on an SRB6 Project Board to tackle Hate Crime. Members of the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny

Sub Committee have commissioned Councillors, who are also Members of the Project Board, to report back to the Sub Committee on how the Council can help the Project Board further its work and aims and become more effective.

## **8.6 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES**

8.7 Southwark is in the process of formulating a new strategy on equalities issues to comply with anti discrimination legislation on race, gender, disabilities and human rights. This Sub Committee has undertaken a review of the arrangements and services which will be provided for disabled people. The review has included commissioning a mystery shopping exercise with the help of a consultancy, Disability Matters, to find out how well Council offices are equipped to meet the needs of disabled users. The Sub Committee will also have input to a Disabilities and Equalities Action Plan in due course to influence their development and help the Council meet Level 2 of the Equalities Standard.

## **9. EDUCATION, YOUTH AND LEISURE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Aubyn Graham – Chair  
Councillor Columba Biango – Vice Chair  
Councillor Maggie Ambrose  
Councillor Stephen Flannery  
Councillor Peter John  
Councillor Lisa Rajan  
Councillor Lewis Robinson  
Councillor Robert Smeath

9.1 The Education, Youth and Leisure scrutiny Sub Committee has permanent co-opted Members with voting rights as follows:

1 Church of England diocesan representative;  
1 Roman Catholic diocesan representative;  
2 duly elected parent governor representatives

9.2 This Sub Committee takes as its terms of reference all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority, including the provision of opportunities for education, training and learning outside the school environment, the impact of other Council functions on education in the borough, and the contribution of other statutory and voluntary organisations. It also reviews the provision and management of all aspects of leisure activities across the borough and has a particular remit to look at youth services and youth policy.

### Influencing policy

The draft Post Inspection Action Plan [PIAP] (following the Ofsted Report of July 2002) was reviewed over two meetings in October and November 2002, and

recommendations formulated to the Executive. Following these recommendations: the plan was developed in two formats - one version as an officer/management tool, with a second, more user-friendly version for members and stakeholders; a list of consultees was appended to the plan; timely publication of the admissions booklet was agreed; a monitoring role for the sub-committee was agreed.

Early in 2003, the Executive also accepted the recommendation of the sub-committee to commission a new strategy to minimise low-level disruption, based on sharing best practice, to be developed in consultation with headteachers, and that the next revision of the Behaviour Support Plan should include the new strategy.

The preferred option of the sub-committee for secondary school provision in East Dulwich/Nunhead has been adopted by the Executive i.e. to establish a small boys school on the Waverley Lower School site with the intention of federating with Waverley Girls School.

#### Holding the Executive to account

The Executive Member for Education, Youth & Leisure has been held directly to account through Executive Member Questions and the sub-committee reviewing the Quarterly Performance Reports to Executive. The sub-committee has also reviewed the management reports to the Executive Member on Key Stage 2 performance and will be monitoring the implementation of the PIAP in Autumn 2003.

#### Engaging stakeholders

This sub-committee is unique, in having four statutory co-opted voting members representing parent governors and the dioceses. In addition to these co-opted members, the sub-committee has sought to cast as wide a net as possible to involve local stakeholders in its work. The PIAP, Behaviour Management, Exclusions & Attendance, and the Congestion Charge have been debated with headteachers, governors, teachers, trade unionists, Southwark Race & Equalities Council and external advisers.

#### Engaging the local community

The scrutiny of secondary school provision in East Dulwich/Nunhead generated a great deal of interest from local people, with weekly features in Southwark News and the South London Press as it continued. Members of the EDEN campaign group and the Waverley School community attended almost every meeting of the sub-committee and a deputation with a 500 signature petition was presented in January 2003.

## **10. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Toby Eckersley – Chair  
Councillor Lisa Rajan – Vice Chair

Councillor Fiona Colley  
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle  
Councillor Stephen Flannery  
Councillor Jonathan Hunt  
Councillor Gavin O'Brien  
Councillor Andy Simmons

10.1 This Sub Committee has oversight of the Best Value Process and matters relating to performance and service delivery, budget, finance and asset management, human resources, the council's role as an employer and other corporate practices, customer access issues including e-government, information technology and communications and consultation with local communities and stakeholders. Its remit is therefore wide ranging.

## **10.2 DEVELOPING COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

10.3 The administration had announced their intention to create community councils in order to take local decision making out of the Town Hall and closer to the communities affected by those decision. The Finance and General Purposes Scrutiny Sub Committee was asked to undertake a review of the best options for the functions and format of these new bodies. Their report set out a series of recommendations addressing the devolution of planning and licensing powers to Community Councils, their contribution to issues of community safety and environmental improvements, including enviro-crime and the work of Street Action Teams and traffic management. The Sub Committee also made recommendations on the way Community Councils will carry out consultation. It was policy development in action, since the scrutiny review became the principle vehicle for both members and officers to develop thinking and test ideas as to how community councils should work. The Executive was able to use this report effectively as a blue print for developing the model. Community councils are now in place in Southwark, and scrutiny will be asked to review them and consider any further devolution towards the end of 2003.

## **10.4 CONSIDERATION OF THE 2003/04 REVENUE BUDGET**

10.5 The Sub Committee received a briefing from the Executive Member for Finance on the process for setting the Council's 2003/04 Revenue Budget. The Sub Committee had a particular remit to consider the scale of spending proposed in 2003/04 compared to the available resources, changes in the ways local authorities are financed by central government and in ensuring that resources reflect priority spending requirements, for example, the Council's commitment to modernise customer access processes and subsequent improvements in service delivery.

10.6 This review led to some learning for the committee – that the process for budget scrutiny needed to be refined so that scrutiny began much earlier in the year when the key policy choices are being made, and to undertake some formal budget scrutiny training.

## **11. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

## **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Eliza Mann – Chair  
Councillor Dominic Thorncroft – Vice Chair  
Councillor Denise Capstick  
Councillor Vicky Naish  
Councillor Abdur-Rahman Olayiwola  
Councillor Veronica Ward

11.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committees have specific powers to scrutinise health bodies. Health bodies are required by law to supply information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and attend meetings when asked to do so. In addition the development of new Patients Forums and the abolition of the system of Community Health Councils, from September 2003, means that this Sub Committee has a particularly important role in ensuring that high quality health services continue to be provided to the people of Southwark and in promoting and championing the involvement of the public in decisions to ensure their voices are supported and encouraged.

11.2 The Sub Committee can review all aspects of residential, day, family placement, domiciliary and respite care, social work across a range of needs, homecare and emergency services for the elderly, fostering and adoption, youth offending services, children's services, collaborative working with health agencies, assessing the impact of the Council's and other agencies services on the physical and social well being of the borough's residents including aspects of the integration of social services and health services.

### **11.3 ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE**

11.4 Primary Care covers a range of services including General Practitioner services, district nursing, health visiting and counselling, Dentistry and community pharmacies. The issues of access to these services are complex. The Sub Committee chose to focus on primary access to General Practitioners in this review including the recruitment and retention of GPs, the recruitment and retention of non-general practitioner practice staff, closed lists and removal from closed lists and the variability in access to General Practitioners across the borough. Access to primary care is also subject to government targets. The Sub Committee met with representatives from Southwark Primary Care Trust, the Southwark Pensioners Action Group, Joseph Healy from Southwark Community Health Council CHC and the Local Medical Committee. In addition the Sub Committee received a body of written evidence to support the review.

11.5 Key findings from the review have led to recommendations to the Executive around developing and implementing innovative solutions to the housing needs of health staff, and recommendations to the Primary Care Trust around creating the conditions that will attract General Practitioners to the area, greater sharing of resources with the Primary Care Trust to ensure high standard practices and delivery, including maximising the effectiveness of voluntary sector organisations, the provision

of information to the public about access to General Practitioners, and on access to out of surgery hours health provision.

## **12. HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Mark Pursey – Chair  
Councillor Michelle Pearce – Vice Chair  
Councillor Jonathan Hunt  
Councillor Billy Kayada  
Councillor Jelil Ladipo  
Councillor Abdul Mohamed  
Councillor William Rowe  
Councillor Anne Yates

12.1 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee considers all aspects of regeneration of communities in the area, the contribution of Housing and Regeneration to the Council's social inclusion agenda, management of the Council's Housing stock, the development of partnerships with external organisations to meet housing need and regenerate unsatisfactory housing including in the private sector and considering such things as grants and loans to owner occupiers, tenants, landlords and/or developers, homelessness and special needs housing requirements, economic development in the borough including partnership working and the development and review of any economic development plan. It also has oversight of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (the Southwark Plan) as it relates to economic development and transport issues through planning policy.

### **12.2 EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

12.3 Local Authorities have a responsibility to ensure the economic well being of the communities they serve. The Council's Community Strategy also has an aim of creating a thriving and sustainable economy through promoting wealth creation as a key driver. The Council recognised a need for a strategic approach to promoting enterprise in the borough to ensure these priorities are met. This Sub Committee undertook a review of the Council's draft Enterprise Strategy and a Local Strategic Partnership draft Employment Strategy. The two documents needed to be reviewed together because the Southwark Enterprise Strategy that finally emerges will be shared with key partners. They will be joint custodians of the strategy and brokers for its implementation. The strategy has strong links to the Council's Anti-Poverty agenda and the Unitary Development Plan.

12.4 The review took place over three meetings with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Economic Development & Strategic Partnerships and the Director of Southwark Employment Zone, and an external witness. Key findings from the review to help inform the eventual strategy were that it should further address the co-ordination of information sharing between support agencies, including support to local people to help them find employment, help foster business growth in key sectors

and locations, establish strong links between education and training, address whether special planning guidance is required for enterprise and better marketing of Southwark as a desirable place to invest or run a business. The Sub Committee will have further oversight of the strategy.

12.5 One part of the review focused on accessible and affordable housing, and looked at key worker housing in relation to the provisions of the Council's draft Unitary Development Plan. The Sub Committee may revisit key worker housing later in its work programme.

## **12.6 LEASEHOLDER BILLS: REPAYMENT SCHEMES**

12.7 The Council has been considering options to assist leaseholders with repaying major works service charges. Debts have accrued where Leaseholder Bills have not been paid for a number of reasons. A Leaseholder Council Working Party considered ways of easing the burden on leaseholders who are experiencing genuine difficulty in paying bills, further to existing repayment schemes.

12.8 The review was carried out with the contribution of Members of the Leaseholder Council. The Sub Committee considered both the financial position of the Council and the interests of Leaseholders and concluded that extending an interest free repayment period under one of the repayment schemes may provide an incentive to leaseholders to make a more timely repayment of major works bills and, therefore, improve the financial position of the Council in the longer term. It made a further recommendation about standardising procedures to regulate those leaseholders who default on repayments.

## **13. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Membership [2002-03]**

Councillor Neil Watson – Chair  
Councillor Mark Glover – Vice Chair  
Councillor Paul Bates  
Councillor Graham Neale  
Councillor Eliza Mann  
Councillor Charlie Smith

13.1 The MORI 2002 Survey put a cleaner and greener borough high on a list of resident concerns. It is one of the Council's strategic objectives. This Sub Committee takes its reviews from the broad agenda of environmental management across the borough but in particular as it may relate to parks and open spaces, energy conservation, waste management, in particular recycling, air quality, transport and parking policies and all the other strategies, policies and service delivery provided by the Environment, Leisure and Transport Departments.

### **13.2 WASTE MANAGEMENT**

13.3 The Council has to meet strict national targets on recycling more of its waste and to encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste they create. This Sub Committee has had input to a new Waste Management Strategy which looks ahead to the year 2021, and what is being done, or is proposed, to do with recycling. Key findings from the review have included a recommendation that more emphasis should be placed on a publicity, education and information campaign to encourage maximum resident and business take up of recycling schemes and initiatives.

#### **13.4 ENVIRO CRIME**

13.5 Enviro-Crime deals with issues such as littering, graffiti, dog fouling and fly-tipping. The Environment and Leisure Department has responsibility for ensuring that the Council's agenda for dealing with Enviro Crime is progressed, particularly through Community Wardens schemes. This Sub Committee carried out a comprehensive review of areas of Enviro-Crime. The Sub Committee has made several recommendations to the Executive Body as a result including supporting the set up and implementation of a geographically coded database to record incidents of enviro-crime. This was considered particularly important in terms of graffiti because drugs dealers often use particular graffiti 'tags' to advertise the availability of drugs in different areas. In addition the Sub Committee recommended that greater publicity is procured to support ongoing initiatives in Southwark, that closer joint working arrangements are secured with the Police, that relevant bodies and authorities should be lobbied to ensure the developers and building contractors comply with Environmental Protection and Pollution legislation, including giving the Council the power to seize vehicles involved in fly-tipping and serve Fixed Penalty notices on those breaking the law. An additional recommendation seeks funding to enable the Council to take part in an *ENCAMS People and Places* programme which encourages schools, community groups and business forums to become more involved in the issues.

#### **13.6 HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE**

13.7 This Sub Committee undertook a review of the vision document and improvement plan arising from a Best Value Review of Highways. The Highways Infrastructure Group has a responsibility to maintain the physical integrity of Southwark's Street Scene, including responsibility for commissioning and controlling projects to improve the fabric of the highway network. Members of this Sub Committee looked at the key policy, performance and finance issues arising and made recommendations to do with better customer care through more consultation with the public, improved monitoring of the activities of utility companies to ensure less disruption to traffic and members of the public, the strategy for awarding future contracts and about information provision so that members of the public know which parts of the highways infrastructure are managed by the Council and which by Transport for London.

### **14. The next steps**

14.1. Our task over the past year has been to ensure that we have the right building blocks and processes in place to support the Overview and Scrutiny function and the

various reviews. We are confident that this has been achieved and that existing arrangements are becoming a model of good practice.

14.2 The new year's work programmes will be informed by the learning we have accrued to date and the development programmes and processes we have in place as a result. Some of these are detailed below:

### **14.3 NEW OFFICER SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

A dedicated Scrutiny Team has been established within Corporate Strategy, consolidating and enhancing the capacity of corporate Officers to support Overview and Scrutiny.

### **14.4 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

In February 2003, members and officers undertook further training and development to build capacity and knowledge. The training for Members looked in particular at matching the method of scrutiny to the outcome sought by members. The training for officers helped raise political awareness and increased their knowledge about the new ways of working through Overview and Scrutiny. Development programmes will be ongoing for both Members and Officers and a member development project team has been established as part of the Council's improvement programme, Forward@Southwark.

### **14.5 MONITORING THE WORK OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

We have designed a monitor which logs the reviews and recommendations arising from Overview and Scrutiny reviews as one means of tracking the breadth, scope and totality of scrutiny work undertaken.

### **14.6 EVALUATION**

We have commissioned an external evaluation of our Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, led by the Office for Public Management. This has enabled us to challenge the processes we have in place, looking at such issues as:

- the effectiveness of the arrangements in terms of shared understanding of the purposes of Overview and Scrutiny and its impact;
- the process itself, that is, to determine if it is calling the Executive to account effectively;
- the support required by both Members and dedicated Scrutiny Officers from the rest of the Council;
- how we can further communicate and engage communities in the work of Overview and Scrutiny;
- developing relationships between Overview and Scrutiny and Community Councils;

- how well we are balancing the work programmes of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and its Sub-Committees;
- the methods used to carry out Scrutiny reviews and whether we can develop these.

The evaluation report confirmed that Southwark's scrutiny arrangements rank well against the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's [ODPM] benchmark, and set out a number of areas for members to take forward as further development activity.

#### **14.7 ENGAGING THE PRESS AND MEDIA**

We have put in place a publicity protocol for Scrutiny which was approved by our Standards Committee in March 2003.