



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the meeting of the OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on 5th APRIL 2004 at 7.00 P.M. at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Kim HUMPHREYS (Chair)
Councillors Barrie HARGROVE, Gavin O'BRIEN, Andy SIMMONS, Neil WATSON, Anne YATES, Stephen FLANNERY [Reserve] and Billy KAYADA [Reserve]

ALSO PRESENT: Shelley Burke – Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Glen Egan – Assistant Borough Solicitor
Ian Hughes – Head of Corporate Strategy
Lucas Lundgren – Scrutiny Team
Sarah Naylor – Assistant Chief Executive Performance & Strategy
Raymond Stevenson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Linda Manchester, Eliza Mann and Ian Wingfield [Reserve], and the Reverend Canon Grahame Shaw.

CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny advised the Committee that Councillor John Friary had asked for clarification of his position in respect of his ability to be involved in consideration of Item 9 - as a Camberwell Green Ward Member.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.7(2) Members were reminded that the Proper Officer had been notified that Councillor Billy Kayada would replace Councillor Ian Wingfield as reserve Member for discussion of Item 9: Reference from Council Assembly 31/03/04 - Deputation by Black Awareness Group [Imperial Gardens].

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT

The Chair agreed to the circulation of the following items which had not been available for circulation with the main Agenda, i.e.

Item 3: Scrutiny Awayday 28th January 2004 – Report Back

- Actions arising from the awayday, and awayday running order

Item 4: Constitutional Issues

Item 7: Canada Estate – Report Back from Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- Correspondence submitted by Cllr Eckersley

Item 9: Reference from Council Assembly [31/03/04]: Deputation by the Black Awareness Group in respect of Imperial Gardens

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures made.

In respect of interests, Members declared as follows, i.e.

Councillor Neil Watson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 9 having served on the Planning Committee that considered the Fairview Homes application.

Councillor Stephen Flannery declared his interest in Item 9, as a member of the Disciplinary Appeals Sub-Committee. He also advised of a possible interest in Item 7 Canada Estate.

Councillor Anne Yates declared a personal [non-prejudicial] interest in Item 7 as a resident of Canada Estate. She declared membership of the Disciplinary Appeals Sub-Committee as a potential personal [prejudicial] interest in respect of Item 9.

Councillor Barrie Hargrove declared a personal [non-prejudicial] interest in Item 7 as a Member of the Arbitration Panel that had considered residents claims in respect of Canada Estate works.

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 is available for public inspection.

The 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 Open minutes of the meetings held on 10th February and 1st March 2004 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings and signed by the Chair, subject to correction of Councillor Watson's first name in the list of those present in the Minutes of 10th February 2004.

VARIATION TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair gave notice that the agenda order would be considered as follows, i.e. Item 1, 9, followed by Items 2-8.

1. **ANNUAL INTERVIEW WITH LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER** [see pages 1-2]

Councillor Nick Stanton [Leader] and Councillor Caroline Pidgeon [Deputy Leader] were welcomed to the meeting.

Cllr Stanton opened by remarking that he hoped the interplay between scrutiny and the Executive would continue to be useful, especially in respect of call-ins [recently on housing matters]. He trusted scrutiny felt that the Executive had been receptive to their recommendations. He was delighted that the authority's CPA rating had increased, and thanked both Members and officers for the work necessary to achieve this. The recent peer review had highlighted a number of the authority's strengths. Although the Council had not been successful in securing an award in the recent Local Government Association awards round this year, the nominations received had acted to raise staff morale within the Council. The Council had recently been awarded an ENCAMS award for its street cleaning and campaigning. Good progress has been made towards key commitments, overall.

After this general opening statement, the Leader and Deputy Leader responded to Member questions, following the order of those in the report which have been reproduced here for ease of reference.

Education

1.1 What provision is made for excluded children to continue their studies ? Do you think that the current system is adequate particularly given that the majority of excluded children are from ethnic groups ?

Three pupil referral units exist for children excluded from school, with the aim of returning pupils to the mainstream. Southwark's interventions were at least as successful as those of other authorities, reflected in performance. Proposals exist to establish a fourth unit, and the authority is awaiting the result of the education assessment on this.

1.2 Will the Council consider piloting schools for black children, run by black teachers and governors? if so, when?

The Leader felt that this did not encourage social cohesion or multi-culturality in the borough. In respect of faith schools, he believed these should include some places open to those of other faiths.

1.3 Will the council consider opening more youth activities, after school clubs and study groups to provide a safer environment for children and teenagers in the borough?

The Leader replied that Southwark's schools were the boroughs greatest facilities and would reap the benefits of any investment in them. They should be open more often after normal school hours. £1 million has been secured for playground improvements through Community Councils. It was frustrating that conditions could not currently be attached to this allocation, such as a requirement to open out-of-hours. There were insurance issues in respect of longer opening hours for schools, but these were not insuperable.

1.4 Will the council consider introducing school buses as a way of easing school run congestion?

Councillor Stanton replied that this was a matter for Transport for London rather than for this authority.

1.5 Does the Leader consider that the current education budget adequately addresses the needs of underachieving children in schools?

Special Educational Needs were a performance area that continued to be a problem for the authority and would be addressed. Raising the budget would not resolve problems extant.

1.6 Public interest report re-Imperial Gardens - is the Council institutionally racist ?

The Leader responded that he did not believe that as a corporate body the Council was racist, but he could not guarantee that each person working within the authority operated a model of good practice. Race Impact Assessments were currently being undertaken, approved by the Commission for Racial Equality. The objective of these assessments was to identify how services might better promote equality and tackle discrimination, with a focus on achieving equality in both access and outcomes for service users.

After the District Auditor had reported, the Chief Executive and the Leader had written to the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality asking what action the authority might take in addition to the action points outlined in the report. The CRE responded that no additional action was required.

* ***The Leader agreed to provide Scrutiny Team with this letter to circulate to OSC Members.***

Councillor Hargrove noted that the CRE had praised the race aspects of the Corporate Equalities Plan only.

1.7 Community Councils

How does the Deputy Leader consider the devolution of planning and licensing functions to Community Councils has worked in practice?

The Deputy Leader responded that this seemed to be working well and effectively and that residents appeared to be happy with delegation of these functions to Community Councils. At each meeting at which planning applications were considered a map of the areas concerned was now available for ease of reference for those present considering the application. In respect of the Licensing function, Councillors are generally very familiar with their local ward areas and this contributed to this working well. Delegation of the alcohol licensing function would be delayed and needed further consideration.

Community Councils had been operating meetings differently, using measures such as earlier meeting start times, presenting items in a different way to the meeting, and consideration of licensing and planning applications on discrete nights.

In respect of feedback from residents, the Inlogov report appeared to support feedback received from residents. It was too early however to assess whether there had been an increase in the number of appeals against planning and licensing decisions since delegation of these functions.

Members asked whether increased involvement and localised consideration of planning matters was likely to lead to more conservative decision-making ? Councillor Pidgeon responded that all Members had received training in probity and in dealing with applications. Consideration of mobile phone masts placements had remained with the main planning committee after guidance to this effect was received. Generally she believed that involvement of the wider community resulted in better planning decisions being taken, especially in respect of making larger planning applications more transparent.

* ***Officers were asked to provide information about the number of appeals [made and successful] to Community Councils – on a percentage basis [of Licensing and of Planning applications].***

Members raised concerns about the level of understanding of those present at consideration of applications, of the application and hearing procedures. The Council could do more to inform and brief on this. Members believed Brent Council had produced a simple leaflet explaining these matters.

In respect of what further plans existed to devolve powers, the Deputy Leader stated that a number of points/areas suitable for local control, including schools capital budget and community safety had emerged from the Baines Committee report. A Member evening was planned to discuss the way forward following the Inlogov review. This would be held in June or July 2004, with a view to possibly introducing new delegated powers from September 2004.

In respect of revenue items £870,000 additional revenue had been achieved through ceasing to offer Second Home discount on Council Tax. Three pilot schemes focusing on allocation would conclude in April/May 2004. Consideration of revenue item delegation would take place immediately after allocation.

Although proposed by the Chair, there were no immediate plans to consider parks issues at Community Councils, but Councillor Pidgeon did not rule out consideration if there was sufficient Member interest.

Members expressed concern about the turnover of support staff to Community Councils, although simultaneously acknowledging the good quality of temporary staff engaged to support the process. Councillor Pidgeon reported that Community Councils were now permanently staffed, and that additional funding had been secured to enable Community Involvement and Development Unit to provide support to each Community Council.

1.8 How will the £1M growth allocated to Community Councils in this year's growth be spent ?

Councillor Pidgeon responded that there had been £3M capital allocation for the *Cleaner, Greener, Safer* programme, for allocation amongst all eight Community Councils. In addition to this allocation £1M existed for which Community Councils could bid for use on out of school activities.

1.9 How was the authority addressing the issues around consultation with smaller businesses during general consultation on proposals for large-scale development schemes within the borough ?

The Leader acknowledged the concerns over the formal planning consultation process, and was clear that in the case of Imperial Gardens this had not happened as it should have. The Council also needed to consider how major regeneration schemes included stakeholders in consultations, in particular how people might continue to run their businesses during regeneration. Some businesses would inevitably not survive regeneration plans in particular areas, but it must be recognized that smaller businesses had an important stake in consultation. Much work was required in respect of advice and support to small businesses, and this must be approached with clarity and honesty.

1.10 **Southwark Alliance**

What is the Leader doing to ensure that the Council's desire to have a member from each party on the Southwark Alliance [SA] is being implemented?

Councillor Stanton responded that at the first SA meeting in June 2002, he had suggested an increase in Councillor representation on that body from two to three Members, but this proposal was unpopular with other partners and was voted down. The recent IdeA peer review indicated that this was a common complaint from Councillors, and he suggested that authorities perhaps needed to give thought to why LSPs are not keen to increase Member representation, generally. Tenants expressed interest in doing more ward-based work themselves, which was a very similar function to Councillors ward representative work. SA would be undertaking a membership review in Autumn 2003.

The SA had already expanded its representation by three additional places, including a further resident representative. He believed that the reason for not wanting further Councillor representation was that the SA wanted to remain a non-Council body. The SA needs to know that Members sitting on it have the power to act on behalf of the Council, and to take forward whatever is decided at the SA meetings.

Councillor Stanton was personally supportive of one Member from each political party being represented on the SA, although Government Office for London had confirmed that Local Strategic Partnerships were required only to be effective and not representative. The terms of membership were now set for the next three years.

1.11 **Housing**

Progress report and discussion on the areas that have been called in, i.e. face to face review; BVR housing management; SGTO funding and status; and the secure tenancy agreement.

The Chair noted that BVR Housing Management had been the subject of a call-in and that there was ongoing scrutiny work on housing management. There would shortly be a report to the Executive addressing consultation around the BVR Housing Management.

Members asked the Leader for an update on the Tenant Participation Compact. The Leader had not personally been involved in its monitoring and did not respond fully to this question.

In respect of the review of Face-to-Face services, there existed the question of how much to consult with one type of customer when one was changing services delivered to all tenants.

In respect of the Secure Tenancy Review, the process of reaching agreement was difficult. The IDEA had raised issues about the capacity of tenants to deal with the volume of consultation documentation and accordingly to respond. When asked about the future of Sub-Offices, their location, and the medium term future of offices identified to remain following the review, the Leader acknowledged it was in everyone's interests to be clear and that the review results would be taken into account. The Chair noted that tenant concern remained about how the detail of how the transition from the old to the new arrangements would be made.

Members noted that East Walworth ward had been very interested in the Tenant Compact, but others less so. It was acknowledged it was still in the early stages of implementation however.

1.12 **Modernising Day Care**

In respect of the MDC review, the Head of Services to Older People and People with Disabilities had updated all Members on the review. Members asked what progress had now been made in respect of delays to assessments for older people. The Deputy Leader confirmed these assessments had indeed taken longer than anticipated, even taking into account the need for additional support to some reviews i.e. translation services. There had been a higher need than previously anticipated during assessment. There was no impact on revenue issues, however. The Council now had a better map of its client base and an understanding of what enabling services are required.

1.13 **Early Years BV Review**

The Committee were concerned that there appeared to be conflicting views from managers and user representatives about the measures, and they acknowledged that implementation was clearly a balancing act. Members asked whether the review was on track.

The Leader stated that this year the Council had not reduced its subsidy as much as planned. Anticipated savings were consequently reduced. There had been no closures to date. The debate arose as to whether the impetus for change had arisen from changes to Council subsidy or as a result of the market changing.

1.14 **Performance Management**

Councillor Simmons asked what lessons had emerged from the recent IDeA peer review in respect of Performance Management ? The Leader responded that although the quality of reports was good, the IDeA peer review team had made mention of the timeliness of report provision, and whether the Executive can give adequate attention to matters given the heaviness of its agendas. Councillor Simmons referred to an Executive report due for consideration the following week, which did not make include reference to the GCSE results, and questioned therefore whether an even balance of information in the reports was being achieved. The Leader agreed that performing services needed praise and underachieving services required to be addressed.

1.15 **Forward Plan**

The meeting acknowledged that most Members believe that the Forward Plan document in its current form was not a transparent document that enabled the public to understand what decisions were key and the timing of their consideration. The Leader felt that the current arrangements did not facilitate the Executive's management of its business either, not assisting in helping it work out when decisions were likely to be taken. It was not a good planning tool. Members suggested the addition of reasons for such slippage into the Forward Planning document, and the Leader was in agreement in principal.

The Leader spoke in respect of what relationship existed between the Mayor of London and this authority. Councillor Stanton was astonished that the Mayor had not sought information from the borough's Leaders during his first two years in office. Hence opportunities for consultation on London-wide concerns and joint or partnership working had been lost. The Mayor had however raised problems about affordable housing with the authority.

1.16 **Scrutiny**

In respect of Member attendance at scrutiny, Councillor Stanton believed this was an industrial staffing problem. Attendance at scrutiny was not monitored. He acknowledged that Community Council and scrutiny meetings often clashed and felt that an all-party discussion about the Council Calendar might be beneficial.

The Leader acknowledged the very interesting scrutiny work on teenage pregnancy, Community Councils and in respect of Thames Water, and felt that increased pre-scrutiny of Executive decisions could benefit the decision-making process.

* ***The Committee asked the Leader to relay this aspiration to senior officers in the Directorates.***

The Leader asked the Committee how it felt to be carrying out scrutiny, and whether Members were content with the current arrangement of themed scrutiny Sub-Committees, or whether a cross-portfolio approach was required. The Chair stated that more work on cross-cutting scrutiny would be undertaken in the coming year as this aspect had not been entirely successful.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Deputy Leader for attending the Committee.

9. **REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL ASSEMBLY 31/03/04 – DEPUTATION BY BLACK AWARENESS GROUP IN RESPECT OF AUDIT COMMISSION PUBLIC INTEREST REPORT "AWARD OF PLANNING PERMISSIONS AT 295-297 CAMBERWELL NEW ROAD", AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN REPORT ON INVESTIGATION INTO COMPLAINT NO.02/B/08100** [see pages 87-89]

Having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 9 having served on the Planning Committee that considered the Fairview Homes application, Councillor Neil Watson re-iterated his declaration and left the room for discussion of this item.

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny introduced the report, and the Chair outlined the decision of Council Assembly from which this item had arisen.

The Assistant Borough Solicitor confirmed that following initial research the authority were aware of the following leading barristers with experience in planning and local government law, i.e: Nigel Giffin Q.C. - who had taken cases to high courts and was available to advise the Council quickly; Timothy Straker Q.C. – who was able to advise quickly; and James Goudi Q.C. - to a former leader of another authority [it was not known whether he was available to advise at short notice, however].

Mr Stevenson was not happy for the process of barrister selection to be carried out by the Council's legal team, and suggested the decision should be one for scrutiny or himself. He felt that selection by the Legal Team would render the appointment not "independent". Mr Stevenson noted he was in contact with Andrew Arden Q.C. whom he hoped might help in quantifying the heads of claim. The Chair agreed it was vital to appoint an individual in whom both M Stevenson and the authority had confidence, and that scrutiny was not being asked to underwrite counsel for the complainants. In addition, he acknowledged the need to expedite this matter.

The Assistant Borough Solicitor confirmed that the reason for barrister appointment was to get an assessment of the likely cost of assistance to Mr Stevenson. Mr Stevenson asked how the barrister could know what was to be assessed without an accompanying letter and documentation from himself setting out the full situation. Presenting a narrow remit could result in an inadequately low figure being assessed.

The Assistant Borough Solicitor advised that the law courts would be closed for Easter, and suggested that the authority invite the Bar Council and the Law Society to nominate a suitably qualified barrister.

Following discussion of this matter, the Committee

- RESOLVED:**
1. That officers be instructed to write to both the Bar Council and the Law Society to obtain a nomination for an appropriately qualified person to determine what might be an appropriate sum to enable determination of the heads of claim in this case;
 2. That Mr Raymond Stevenson be given sight of the authority's letter of request referred to in resolution 1);
 3. That a letter from Mr Raymond Stevenson accompany the authority's letter of request referred to in resolution 1) above.

MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT

At 9.07 p.m. it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the meeting stand adjourned for five minutes.

At 9.12 p.m. the meeting reconvened.

2. ALLEGED FRAUD ON MAJOR VOIDS CONTRACTS: FINAL REPORT FROM FINANCE & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE [see pages 3-8]

The Chair asked the Chair of Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee to present the report.

Councillor Eckersley urged that the report-back on the recommendations [referred to in paragraph 12 of the report] not be delayed, but acknowledged that it would be this Committee's decision whether to ask the Executive to respond to recommendations 12 & 13 together.

Recommendation 9 specifically addressed the situation giving rise to the scrutiny review, and Members acknowledged that the remit of the other recommendations was somewhat wider.

Cllr Eckersley apologised for not having information available to Members about the latest position in respect of the decision on the claim on the Council's own fidelity insurance. He recommended that if the Fidelity Insurance claim is not to be paid, OSC should ask officers to report back to OSC on the steps being taken by the authority to recover the loss through other means.

The Chair recognised the work of the scrutiny Sub-Committee on this matter, and Councillor Eckersley thanked officers for their work on the report.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Executive be asked to respond to all recommendations of the Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee contained in the report, by July 2004;
 2. That the Executive respond to this Committee on the progress of the Fidelity Insurance claim;
 3. That officers be asked to provide Members of this Committee with an interim update on the position with regard to the Fidelity Insurance claim, this update to include both a departmental and corporate perspective.

3. **SCRUTINY AWAYDAY 28 JANUARY 2004 – REPORT BACK** [see pages 79-82]

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny presented the review of the recent scrutiny awayday held on 28 January 2004.

The Head of Marketing and Communications had been invited to attend the next meeting of this Committee on 6th May 2004, and Members anticipated that the attendance of both Amanda Hirst and the Borough Solicitor & Secretary would enable informed Member discussion of matters raised at the awayday, including scrutiny press protocols and scrutiny's relationship with Executive reports and items on the Forward Plan.

In respect of budget scrutiny, the Committee noted that the Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee would consider this at its next meeting on 7th April 2004. Feedback from this meeting might well inform future discussion by Overview & Scrutiny Committee of how scrutiny sub-committees consider and monitor budgets relating to their individual areas of responsibility.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Head of Communications bring the scrutiny press protocols to this Committee for discussion on 6th May 2004;
 2. That the Head of Overview & Scrutiny develop a simple method for reporting scrutiny Sub-Committee activity, this

reporting to start in the new Municipal year;

3. That creative approaches be developed to scrutiny, including an online scrutiny event pilot, and that this development be incorporated into scrutiny Work Programme 2004/05 planning discussions being undertaken;
4. That further consideration be given to how best the scrutiny function might in future respond to topical issues;
5. That the links between Community Councils and scrutiny be given further consideration;

Members were mindful that this discussion might usefully take place during the Member feedback session on Community Councils proposed by the Deputy Leader during her interview earlier in the meeting.

6. That Executive Member interviews be programmed for February/March to enable these Members to be asked to signal their plans for the forthcoming municipal year, and thus enable scrutiny Sub-Committees to take these into account in formulating their work programmes;
7. This Committee notes that the scrutiny process will require ongoing refinement and development based on this year's experience, and agrees that Councillor Eckersley should take part in and feed back on discussion at the London Scrutiny Network.
8. That the Head of Overview & Scrutiny make arrangements for a further scrutiny awayday in June 2004, and pursue the Director of the Centre for Public Scrutiny as a facilitator for this session.
9. That the Head of Overview & Scrutiny circulate details of the Centre for Public Scrutiny modelling work undertaken in respect of scrutiny input into and relationship with the policy planning process

4. **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES** [see pages 83-86]

- (a) **Health Scrutiny – Consideration of Joint Arrangements for Establishing Joint Scrutiny Committees;**
- (b) **Miscellaneous amendments**

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny presented the proposals for constitutional change outlined in the report. Members discussion ensued about the political and practical implications of proposals in paragraphs 5 – 5.1, following which it was

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the following text be inserted at paragraph 6.05 of Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, i.e.
“(I) arrange for relevant functions in respect of health scrutiny to be exercised by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee of another local authority where

the Council considers that another local authority would be better placed to undertake those relevant functions, and that local authority agrees to exercise those functions; and

(m) may appoint a joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee which shall comprise two or more local authorities and arrange for the relevant functions of those authorities to be exercised by the joint committee.”

2. That the following point 21 be added to Part 3a “Matters reserved to Council Assembly”, i.e.:

“delegate to Overview and Scrutiny Committee the decision to establish a joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of matters relating to the health scrutiny function and [in consultation with the other authorities who are members of the joint scrutiny committee] to agree the terms of reference and determine the payment of expenses for that committee ”

3. That the following new paragraph 18.8 be inserted in the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Paragraph 18 “Call-in”

“In the event that the Chair or Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny decides not to support a call-in request received within deadline and signed by 3 members of the Committee, they are required to set out their reasons in writing to the Proper Officer, who will circulate this information to Members and other interested stakeholders.”

4. That the following provision be added to Scrutiny Procedure Rules Paragraph 20 “Urgent Decisions – definitions of urgency and steps that must be followed”, i.e.

Insert “the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee” before “the Mayor” at sub paragraphs (2), (3) and (4).

5. **REFERENCE FROM EXECUTIVE - CONSULTATION PROCESSES AND FACTORS SURROUNDING EXECUTIVE REPORTS** [see pages 9-10]

The Head of Corporate Strategy introduced the item.

RESOLVED:

1. That discussion of this report be deferred to the next meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, at which the wider issues of the interrelationship between scrutiny and the Executive’s forward planning processes would be discussed.
2. That the Borough Solicitor & Secretary be asked to clarify the current position and guidance on the matter.

6. **POST OFFICE CLOSURES** [see pages 11-58]

The Head of Overview & Scrutiny introduced the report, which included a ministerial statement on Post Office Closures, a Postwatch briefing, and transcript of a Greater London Assembly Public Services Committee session on 21 October 2003. Several options for progressing the scrutiny were set out.

Councillor Eckersley asked that should a review be undertaken, information about the size of queues as a measure of customer satisfaction be secured. Members agreed that a briefing from Postwatch representatives would most usefully inform Member consideration at this stage.

RESOLVED: That Postwatch be invited to the next meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6th May 2004 to inform Member consideration of when and how to approach this matter.

7. **REPORT FROM HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – CANADA ESTATE**
[see pages 59-64]

The Chair agreed to the circulation of information relevant to this item, provided by the Chair of Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee. This comprised the Director of Housing's response dated 29 March 2003 to questions raised at Council Assembly on 28 January 2004.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Eckersley be asked to bring the information and response he receives in respect of his correspondence on this matter to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for this Committee to subsequently consider how to take the matter forward.

8. **SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS UPDATES** [see pages 65-78]

Each Member in turn introduced the scrutiny Sub-Committee business update for the sub-committee of which they held the Chair.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the business updates in respect of each scrutiny Sub-Committee set out in the report be noted.
 2. It was noted that the District Audit's Management letter and Audit report was scheduled for consideration by Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting on 7th April 2004.
 3. That the final report of Regeneration & Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee in respect of scrutiny of public engagement in the Elephant & Castle Regeneration Programme be brought back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6th May 2004.

The meeting ended at 10.00 p.m.

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE:

DATED: