

# SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE C

## PLANNING ENFORCEMENT REVIEW PROPOSAL

- 1 What is the review?**  
Planning enforcement practices and outcomes in Town Centres – using Peckham as a case study using issues raised at Nunhead & Peckham Rye Community Council
- 2 What outcomes could realistically be achieved? Which agency does the review seek to influence?**  
A more focused and timely approach to planning enforcement as one of a number of techniques to improve the quality of the local environment and the image of Town Centres. The review seeks to influence the Council in its planning enforcement functions, which are almost exclusively exercised by officers with little formal member involvement in decision-making.
- 3 When should the review be carried out/completed?**  
i.e. does the review need to take place before/after a certain time?  
  
As soon as practicable. The review outputs are likely to influence the approach taken in a number of current cases in which enforcement action has been lacking or ineffectual.
- 4 What format would suit this review? (eg full investigation, q&a with executive member/partners, public meeting, one-off session)**  
Investigation over a two or three meeting cycle, with one or two meetings used to take oral evidence and the other to agree findings and recommendations.
- 5 What are some of the key issues that you would like the review to look at?**  
a) the role of breaches of planning control in the quality of the local environment and the image of Peckham/Town Centres  
b) suitability of current practices and working methods to dealing with breaches of control of the kind found in the area  
c) in particular, whether effective use is being made of the Council's powers to take pre-emptive action against breaches of planning control, in the light of a number of cases where breaches causing harm have continued for some time  
d) the role of joined-up working between planning enforcement officers and other council departments/other agencies, especially in evidence-gathering and decisions about priorities  
e) staff and resource disposition - Whether town centres, and the residential streets immediately adjacent to it, require a focussed cross-departmental team for planning enforcement and related matters for a minimum of say two years, and how that can best be provided.

f) whether, having regard to the practice in a cross section of other local planning authorities, there is a case for some enforcement decisions to be taken by members rather than under delegated powers; and if so at what level (planning committee, community councils, etc.)

g) New processes to enable local residents and others, who identify possible breaches of planning control, to report these for immediate effective action, and ways in which these processes can be linked effectively with other evolving Council processes for residents to act as eyes and ears for the Council, for example as Street Leaders.

**6 Who would you like to receive evidence and advice from during the review?**

- senior officers in Planning & Regeneration
- local community and business representatives, particularly Eileen Conn
- ward members, particularly Cllr Gordon Nardell

**7 Any suggestions for background information? Are you aware of any best practice on this topic?**

- other authorities vary in their schemes of delegation, but many give a formal role to members via area committees exercising delegated planning powers, ie. the equivalent of community councils. Information should be obtained from a cross-section of local planning authorities
- cross-agency working is thought to be a novel idea, but initial feedback from within the Council is positive. N&PRCC is working in parallel on discussions among local agencies with a view to an "enforcement summit" for the area

**8 What approaches could be useful for gathering evidence? What can be done outside committee meetings?**

e.g. verbal or written submissions, site visits, mystery-shopping, service observation, meeting with stakeholders, survey, consultation event

Mainly written submissions initially, backed up with focused oral evidence including a session with a senior officer. Early draft recommendations could be circulated widely so that a wide range of stakeholders can contribute ideas before the Committee adopts its report.

To give it effective publicity and gather evidence for Peckham case study some suggestions:

1. articles/letters in SLP, SNews, SLife
2. survey for Peckham case study posted/delivered to
  - all residents & traders in Peckham town centre & residential

- streets running into Rye Lane & the High St
- vol & community groups in SE15
  - if there is a database of these - all those who have reported breaches in SE15 of planning control recently e.g. in the last 2 years, and/or the Planning policy mailing list in SE15
  - posters & leaflets in key places e.g. stations, libraries, Council
  - offices

3. evidence gathering public consultation meeting in Peckham town centre area (with Exec Member and senior officers present)

4. N&PRCC + PCC agenda items

5. I Love Peckham Festival - stall with literature about planning and environmental enforcement controls, soliciting views (maybe too early for the Scrutiny Team to organise, but worth Peckham Programme being asked to consider doing this anyway as a PP contribution to the Scrutiny evidence)