

Cabinet

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 8 February 2011 at 6.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Peter John (Chair)
Councillor Ian Wingfield
Councillor Fiona Colley
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle
Councillor Barrie Hargrove
Councillor Richard Livingstone
Councillor Catherine McDonald
Councillor Abdul Mohamed
Councillor Veronica Ward

1. APOLOGIES

All members were present.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair gave notice that the following late item would be considered for reasons of urgency to be specified in the relevant minute:

Item 10 – Policy and Resources Strategy 2011/12 -2013/14 – Revenue Budget

Additionally, the chair confirmed the receipt of 13 deputation requests relating to this item. It was agreed that all the deputations would be heard so that consideration of these representations could be given prior to any final decisions on the budget proposals.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

A public question was received from Ms Parra relating to issues of service delivery for the

council in a period of acute financial pressure. Ms. Parra was not in attendance.

The public question was noted and it was agreed that a response would be sent to Ms. Parra.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the open minutes of the meetings held on 20 and 25 January 2011 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

6. DEPUTATIONS

RESOLVED:

That the following deputation requests be heard in respect of the Policy and Resources Strategy 2011/12-2013/14 revenue budget proposals.

UNISON

The spokesperson addressed the meeting stating their opposition to the proposed budget cuts and the enormous impact on front line services, feeling that the cabinet should 'resist' these cuts. Key issues outlined included the perceived lack of impact on senior management structures, the continued employment of consultants, materialising in various guises and an attack on terms and conditions of employment. It was suggested that the council should utilise budget reserves to limit the impact of these cuts on front line services.

Unison identified a number of other issues as part of their deputation which included:

- Asking why managers were issuing letters of redundancy when consultation was still underway
- Suggested cutting refreshments, use of mobile phones and cabs by officers
- Requested increased tax collection rates and reduction of debt
- Asked that contracts and partnerships be examined
- The use of capitalisation for redundancy
- Promise of voluntary redundancy with no movement and other such measures
- Queried the suggestion made that staff take two weeks unpaid leave to help deliver budget savings

Community Action Southwark

The deputation outlined their concerns relating to the impact of budget cuts on the

voluntary and community sector organisations. Cuts in the region of 25-30% have been notified to this sector with no identification of new opportunities/alternative funding. The deputation acknowledged the difficult position that the council were in with regard to the budget situation but felt that there was greater potential for a 'smarter implementation' of the budget programme. The deputation confirmed that a task force within the voluntary sector had already been set up to look at different elements of the commissioning and grants programme.

Pupils of Boutcher Primary School

Year 6 students at Boutcher primary school attended cabinet to make representations concerning proposed cuts to the Southwark Community Games. The children outlined their anxiety relating to these proposed cuts. It was felt that the games provided an invaluable opportunity to all children to participate in sport activity, to be fit and healthy and an excellent means of expression and social interaction. The children spoke of the skills, the development of talents and new challenges that they had acquired as a result of the games and urged cabinet to consider the funding position of this project. The games also provided fun and enjoyment to the children and young people within Southwark.

Local Residents on Southwark Community Games

The deputation supported the points raised by the year 6 pupils in the previous deputation. It was explained that work of the project was undertaken within the schools (after school clubs), local parks and halls reaching out to the community, especially those on low incomes who would otherwise not be able to afford their children the opportunities provided by the project. In addition to exercise opportunities, the deputation advised that the games promoted healthy eating and tackled some of the obesity issues facing the community. Work was undertaken with older children in positive activities and engagement, avoiding them becoming bored and 'getting into trouble'. It was felt that the team work focus and challenges through the games had a major impact on the children and young people's lives. Again the local residents were able to identify some of the activities that their children had been involved with and how this in turn led to further personal and job development opportunities.

Southwark Arts Forum

The forum made representations to the cabinet regarding the impact of the proposed cuts on the arts and culture sector and the consequent outcome for their members and forums. The forum outlined the contribution of Southwark towards the cultural and tourist quarter. It was explained that the model operated by the forum and their technical and networking expertise, including work within the community and schools had been adopted by other local authorities. Further to a survey of their network, it was felt undoubtedly that the proposed budget cuts would limit the access of groups to the arts. It was felt that the forum and its activities promoted health and well-being, social cohesion and provided value for money; promoting the economic health of the borough. Additionally the forum development role had recently included an examination of the opportunities for the participation of artists in the 2012 Olympics.

Carl Campbell Dance Company No. 7

The dance company provided examples of their work undertaken with all sectors of the community, with a particular strength in breaking down some of the age barriers with young children and older people with all age groups anticipating fully within their activities and projects. The work of the company had also attracted high profile media coverage on various levels, including their 'recycled teenager' group which had shown Southwark in a positive light against the backdrop of negative press. The deputation felt that the project brought dance to all ages, promoted well-being and served to encourage positive relationships within the community.

Homebound Library Service Users

It was confirmed that the deputation spokesperson was unable to attend the cabinet meeting. However, the written representations made by the users were circulated and their concerns with regard to the homebound library service noted.

Bede House Association

The deputation explained that Bede House was the only service within Southwark that provided a specialised support service to victims of domestic violence with a diagnosed mental health condition and who were patients of the community health teams. It was felt that the withdrawal of this service would leave these vulnerable members of the community susceptible to partner, ex-partner and carer abuse. It was suggested that any budget cut would impact disproportionately on women, children and high risk clients diagnosed with mental health conditions. The association also focused on the legal aspect of equalities impact assessments and the cascading type effect of cuts at a variety of different levels. Concerns were also identified with the commissioning process post 31 March 2011 and the absence of timetable/criteria for this process.

Cooltan Arts

The deputation spokesperson confirmed that Cooltan Arts delivered a mental health service enabling people on their journey to recovery. The project believed that mental well-being was enhanced by the power of creativity, as well as providing a cost effective service. Cooltan Arts provided a proven model demonstrating tangible outcomes with a high percentage of people being able to return to employment, training or education. It was felt that the combined uncertainty of the personalisation agenda and the proposed impact of funding cuts would leave services that promoted mental health and well-being in jeopardy. The cabinet member for health and adult social care agreed to take forward funding issues/co-ordination raised by the group with the council's health and social care officers.

Environment and Ecology groups within Southwark

Representatives from a variety of environment and ecology groups within Southwark made representations and argued a case for the protection of the budget programme for this area. A significant percentage cut had been identified that would have ramifications for the participation and involvement of the community within the projects. The projects also provided volunteering opportunities that enabled the volunteers to acquire work experience and a route into paid employment. It was felt that these groups with a small

amount of money were able to bring huge economic, social and financial benefits for the community within Southwark. It was also suggested that these projects served the mental health needs and well being for residents who participated and enjoyed the services provided. In response to questions the deputation acknowledged the assistance that the voluntary transition fund might provide and asked that they be consulted on the criteria, while expressing the need to protect the long viability of the projects.

Blackfriars Settlement

The deputation outlined the significant changes arising from the draft budget proposals on the way in which services were delivered to all ages of residents in the borough. It was felt that there would be a cumulative impact on some residents not only in terms of any voluntary sector grant cuts but also in respect of the proposals around housing tenure, rent levels and reduction in benefits. The spokesperson outlined the successful volunteering project in place and their involvement in service re-design over the coming months. In response to questions the issue of streamlining the grants programme was raised so that organisations did not have multiple officer contact and monitoring points within the council. It was confirmed that work was being undertaken by the council currently in this regard.

Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations

The deputation spokesperson addressed the meeting with regard to the recent rent and service charge decisions. It was felt that the cost of these increases had placed a disproportionate burden on tenants and the poor and vulnerable within Southwark. It was argued that the tenants had to pay for 'mistakes' by the council. The deputation felt that savings could be made by the council in terms of its management structure, use of consultants and the introduction of basic measures like cutting back on the use of taxis by council officers.

Age Concern Southwark

The spokesperson expressed her understanding of the difficult position the council found themselves, in the midst of budgetary pressures and cuts. The issue of equalities impact assessments were raised and the cumulative impact on the community. The spokesperson challenged the perception of day care services as being 'old fashioned' and identified the centres as vibrant and accessible services for older people, reducing the feeling of loneliness and isolation. The deputation made reference to a consultation document with regard to 100% cuts in two day care services; it was not clear what was expected of Age Concern with a limited time period for redesign.

Local Tenants – Housing Revenue Account

It was confirmed that the deputation spokesperson was unable to attend the cabinet meeting. However, the written representations made by this group were circulated and their concerns noted.

MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT

At 8.45pm it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the meeting stand adjourned until 15 February 2011 at 4pm (Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB).

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - APPROVAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2011/12

This item will be considered at the adjourned meeting of the cabinet on 15 February 2011.

8. QUARTER 3 REVENUE MONITORING REPORT - 2010/11

This item will be considered at the adjourned meeting of the cabinet on 15 February 2011.

9. SOUTHWARK AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN 2011 - DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This item will be considered at the adjourned meeting of the cabinet on 15 February 2011.

10. POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2011/12-2013/14 - REVENUE BUDGET

This item will be considered at the adjourned meeting of the cabinet on 15 February 2011.

CLOSED BUSINESS

11. MINUTES

These minutes will be considered at the adjourned meeting of the cabinet on 15 February 2011.

The meeting adjourned at 8.45pm

CHAIR:

DATED: