Southwark Council

Democracy Commission

Friday 8 October 2010
5.00 pm
160 Tooley Street

Membership

Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai
Councillor Columba Blango
Councillor Mark Glover
Councillor Michael Mitchell
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Cleo Soanes

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Webpage: www.southwark.gov.uk/democracy

Democracy Commission

Friday 8 October 2010
5.00 pm
160 Tooley Street

Order of Business

Date: 8 October 2010

Southwark
Council

DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Thursday 23 September 2010 at 6.00 pm at Southwark Town Hall

PRESENT: Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai
Councillor Columba Blango
Councillor Mark Glover
Councillor Michael Mitchell
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Cleo Soanes

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT: Don Phillips
Angela Stanforth

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelly Burke – Head of Scrutiny
Michael Cleere – Community Engagment officer
Stephen Douglass – Head of Community Engagement
Katherine Pitt – Community Engagment officer
Julie Timbrell – Project manager – Democarcy Commission

1.   INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

2.   MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 7 SEPTEMBER 2010

Cllr Al-Samerai asked again for a breakdown of costs of the Conferance and Commission. Stephen Douglass said she would receive it once the Commission had completed this stage of its work.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3.   REVIEWING EVIDENCE SUBMITTED

This was noted.

Cllr Mohamed thanked officers for all the evidence collected, especially Michael Cleere and Julie Timbrell.

4. FOCUS GROUPS : ELECTED MEMBERS, COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR & MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

Transcripts of the four focus groups were included in the pack of papers published.

5. QUESTIONNAIRES

262 questionnaires had been completed in total, both on-line and on paper. The results had not changed significantly since the interim findings had been presented at the last meeting.

Cllr Blango expressed concerns about the ethnicity monitoring, which shows the gaps in the people we are engaging with. There needs to be a strategy to engage Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people. Any future questionnaires should be better targeted at BME people.

Michael Cleere pointed out that the vox pop interviewees are predominantly BME so this re-weighs the balance somewhat.

Cllr Glover cautioned against reading too much into the questionnaire as it is a very small sample of people.

Julie Timbrell commented that the Commission had employed different types of engagement methods to try and ensure that a diversity of voices had been heard. Monitoring information had been captured form the conference but not analysed yet. She could extrapolate monitoring information from all the engagement activities; questionnaires, vox pops, conference attendance & outreach to the Youth Conference and would carry out an equalities analysis at the end of the programme. This could be used to identify any gaps and for the Commission to keep in mind for further work.

6. ORAL TESTIMONY AND VOX POPS

Two transcripts of vox pops were included in the pack of papers published. A third transcript of vox pops was tabled.

Michael Cleere presented the information and commented that it had been a very interesting way of widening the reach of the Commission. The spontaneity of the comments worked well and revealed that most people are interested in democracy – this is very little apathy.

Cllr Morrissey commented that this rich vein of material should not be wasted. Cllr Al-Samerai suggested it could go on the council website. Michael commented that Resonance FM might be

interested in producing a radio programme with the council.

Cllr Morrissey commented that this rich vein of material should not be wasted and asked Michael and the rest of the team to come up with proposals for presenting this work.

7.   **CONFERENCE: PANEL DISCUSSION, WORKSHOPS AND CAFE CONVERSATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE**

Cllr Al-Samerai thanked the Community Engagement team for the notes. Cllr Morrissey asked if the notes for the youth cafe conversation would also be written up. Julie said this had been done but had taken a little longer as this conversation had not been facilitated by one of the team. Both the panel sessions had also now been written up and a final report on the Conference would be produced.

8.   **PROPOSED FUTURE LEGISLATION**

Cllr Al-Samerai thanked Stephan Douglas for the report. Commission can decided – once the new local government legislation comes into force next year - whether more decisions could be delegated to Council Assembly, Cabinet, or Community Councils.

9.   **CONSIDERING THE DRAFT REPORT AND AGREEING THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cllr Al-Samerai thanked Julie Timbrell for the draft report summarising the evidence.

Cllr Mohamed introduced the draft report with suggested recommendation for discussion. This had circulated by email shortly before the start of the meeting.

Cllr Al-Samerai commented that it was unfair to Members to circulate it so soon before the meeting because no-one had had time to consider it properly. Cllr Mohamed responded that any meeting would struggle to agree recommendation and the paper was aimed as guiding the discussions. Cllr Al Sameria added that the draft report was very helpful but while she thought some of the draft recommendations were fine other seemed to have come out of nowhere. Cllr Al – Samerai asked who had drafted the recommendations. Cllr Mohamed said these had been done by him with officers giving some limited assistance.

Cllr Glover commented there was a problem with the amount of time given to digest this. He said that the finalised document would go to Council Assembly along with the legal and financial concurrent. The report that goes to Cabinet will

not be able to identify all the cost implications – there is a bit of work to be done on this.

Cllr Al-Samerai and Cllr Mitchell suggested another meeting to devote more time to agreeing the recommendations. Cllr Mohamed said this would be difficult given the deadlines and suggested that they go through the draft recommendations tabled one by one. This was agreed.

Summary of Recommendations

This was uncontentious but it was agreed to change the heading to 'Introduction.'

Need for Change

It was agreed to add the following bullet points:

- Improve quality of decisions made in Council Assembly
- Hold the administration to account

Cllr Glover cautioned against allowing too much time for public debate, as there would be a risk that special interest groups would dominate.

Purpose: role of the Council Assembly

It was agreed that point 3.2 should be changed to: 'strengthen the role of residents and elected Members to influence and hold the Cabinet to account and to add 'Involve Members and the community early enough to influence change.' The fourth bullet point would be deleted. The fifth would read 'enable Members and the public to influence decision-making.

There was discussion about 4.1 and 4.2 which appeared to conflict with each other. One suggestion was that it could be re-worded to make it clear that the Council Assembly could take on considering more plans and strategies than the legal minimum, rather than only discussing what was legally required.

Cllr Al-Samerai raised the issue of themed meetings. She had concerns over 1) how could they tie in with decisions that had to be made and 2) who decides the themes? Cllr Mohamed responded that support for themes came out very strongly in the evidence. Cllr Morrissey added that these are very popular with community councils. Cllr Glover agreed that there needs to be clarity over who decides the themes, the balance of the agenda and that they should not dominate a whole meeting – there should be opportunities to debate current issues.

Stephen Douglass commented that advice needs to be taken on point 5.1 – revising the number of signatories required for a petition to be presented at Council

Assembly. There was concern that if the number was too low Assembly would be inundated with petitions. It was agreed to take out the reference to the 'Council Assembly Business Panel.'

Cllr Mitchell asked what was meant by 'this is reviewed' in point 5.2 It was agreed that officers, on the basis of clear rules , rather than Members, should decided what deputations are legitimate. It is important that those decisions are a-political. Julie Timbrell said it was possible for officers to look at relaxing the rules to make it easier to bring deputations, and queried if members wanted to prevent them from coming back within 6 months? It was agreed this might be difficult to devise a satisfactory rule governing this.

It was agreed that point 5.2 should include the wording 'the number and timeframe will be reviewed by the Democracy Commission.'

It was agreed that the maximum number of deputations per meeting would be 3, and to review this after a year.

Re point 16.4 – it was agreed that the recommendations of the Commission would be reviewed after a year.

Council Assembly Business Panel

Cllr Mohamed explained that the idea of the business panel was to make Council Assembly more relevant, interesting and inclusive. Its membership would need to be politically balanced or neutral and could co-opt local 'active citizens' to advise on different themes. Discussion followed on the composition of the panel. There was a query on 'proportionality' and 'balance'.

Stephen Douglass pointed out that the Council Assembly agenda is currently put together by officers following the constitution. Following a scrutiny review, North East Somerset council introduced a business management committee to agree the agenda for Full Council.

Cllr Soanes said that it was exciting that the community would be invited, but she was concerned also that we have the right structure and composition.

Cllr Al-Samerai asked if the Constitutional Steering Group could take this on, to avoid creating another bureaucratic structure that did not excite people.

Cllr Glover said that there most be room for a wide number of members to influence the agenda and ensure that topical and relevant issues are discussed and also that there are more opportunities for members to inform decision making.

Given not all the recommendations had been agreed Cllr Mohamed proposed another meeting and this was agreed. Cllr Mohamed requested that members of the Commission , particularly the different political groups, prepare draft

recommendations ready to be discussed at the next meeting.

10. APOLOGIES

       CHAIR:

       DATED:

Feedback from other councils:

Nottingham City Council

1.   Themed Meetings

The council they have worked very hard at various types of themed meetings and while it has been interesting and useful for councilors and they have had some good debates with partners, none have yet brought the public in any numbers.

The Constitution includes a clause on themed meetings:

> "Within its schedule of ordinary meetings, the Council may hold special themed meetings involving representatives from other organisations, such as State of the City debates. In addition, to enable full participation of all councillors in the planning stage of the Council's key strategy documents (the Policy Framework); the Lord Mayor may determine that such discussions should occur at 'Council in Committee' sessions. The Deputy Lord Mayor will normally preside at 'Council in Committee' meetings. These meetings are public meetings subject to the requirements set out in Section 4 (Access to Information)."

In total there are 10 full council meetings per year of which one is the Annual meeting with the normal provision for extraordinary meetings if required. Meetings are normally held at 2pm but the constitution gives discretion to the Lord Mayor to change this if required.

The Scrutiny Team use the annual council business plan with scrutiny chairs to help determine the timing of policy framework items appearance at scrutiny so that scrutiny feeds into policy development at an early stage.

2.   Business Steering Group

The business steering group had been more of a success. It's an informal meeting a week before the council meeting and its core role is to allocate times to agenda items.

The council's political composition is 37, 7, 6 and both the small parties have seats on the business steering group. The steering group appears to have smoothed the running of council meetings. They also maintain a council annual business plan with the policy framework items sketched out and the business steering group uses that to plan future meetings.

The biggest change has been tight control over speaker times.

3.   Petitions

They are just about to have their first petition (Building Schools for the Future - 5K signatures) and the petitioner will be allowed to introduce it rather than a councillor.

Birmingham City Council

1   Themed meetings

Has an indicative annual forward plan of policy framework items

The constitution states the following:

"From September 2005, the Leader of the Council will, on an annual basis, lead a "State of the City" debate and, during the Municipal Year, in accordance with a timetable agreed by the Council Business Management Committee, the Cabinet Members and other Lead Members (i.e. the Lord Mayor's Annual Report to the AGM, Chairmen of the Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Regulatory Committees, a Lead Chairman for the Constituency Committees and Lead Members from the WMPTA, WM Fire & Rescue Authority and the WM Police Authority) shall report to the City Council on the progress, or otherwise, of their respective Roles and Responsibilities (as set out in the City Council's Constitution (Volume A, Part 2 H)).

(2) The time allowed "to debate and receive the Report" for this item shall, unless otherwise agreed by the Council, be as follows:-

Lord Mayor's Annual Report to the AGM – not exceeding 15 minutes;

Cabinet Member Report – not exceeding 40 minutes; and

Other Lead Member Report – not exceeding 30 minutes

(3) As the purpose of these changes are to encourage open and transparent local governance, with a view to making improvements to City Council meetings and enriching the role of City Councillors, the Reports will be debated and no amendment to the Motion "to receive the Report" will be allowed, as to do so will limit the time allocated for debate.

(4) Furthermore, where such a Member is presenting his / her Annual Report, such a Member will not be asked a question relating to his / her Roles and Responsibilities under Standing Order 12 (B).

(5) For Joint Authorities, it will be normal practice for the Committee Manager to invite the relevant Chief Officer to attend the City Council meeting for the item and for him / her to be available to answer any questions / comments from the City Council, as part of the participative debate. The relevant Chief Officer will, of course, be free to determine who from his / her organisation should attend to answer any questions / comments from Members. Members should not see this as an inquisitorial session, but a constructive and meaningful engagement with the relevant Joint Authority."

Business Management Committee established in the Constitution – already circulated.

2.   Business Management Committee (see terms of reference below)

This committee has the three Leaders, three deputy leaders, the group secretaries, and OSC chair (non voting)

Works out the plan for the year (forward plan) and the timetable for cabinet members visiting full Council. They also look at individual Full Council agendas for balance – for example they decided it was too full December deferred an item. They consider the timings for items, such as a Scrutiny report. They find it a useful exercise.

3.   Petitions

Have had 22 but none have reached the threshold to reach full Council.

Bath & North East Somerset

1   Agenda planning process

The four group leaders meet regularly with the Chief Executive. They devise the agenda (forward plan) for the Council yearly which is then communicated to officers and groups.

They also meet prior to Full Council and decide the priority and timings of items. The Mayor is then briefed on the outcome.

Full Council is seen as the vehicle for all members; cabinet as the vehicle for the Administration.

2   Informal session
The informal session were considered useful, however the administration changed political control and they decided to reduce Full Council from 7 to 4 meetings per year (plus ad hoc meetings) and that meant they needed the extra hour for formal business.

The informal sessions were semi structured but not part of the decision making process. They are chaired by the mayor and with a topic and prearranged content.

One particularly useful meeting cited was when they invited all the young people who were standing for Youth Council to present a short speech and then engage in a question and answer session with members. Apparently this was very useful as an exercise in understanding the concerns of young people.

I asked if Members had felt ambushed and the officer said he did not think so because they were still chaired and attendees were invited to speak and regulated, but it was informal enough to allow and promote dialogue and discussion. The officer thought they worked well.

3   Involve members early in policy worked.

The Council had taken a number of polices and plans to Full Council prior to going to Cabinet for decision and he said this had involved more members in decision making successfully.

The officer gave the example two strategies for Schools that had been difficult because it entailed closing or refurbishing certain schools. The first one had dealt with primary schools in clusters. This had first been sent to Scrutiny so they could do some detailed background work on the issues, and then went to Cabinet for decision. The Secondary school strategy had been done as a block. First it went to Scrutiny, then Assembly for full debate and then Cabinet for decision.

The officer felt this had enabled members to fully participate, understand the need for change and participate in decision making.

E.   TERMS OF REFERENCE OF
COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE,

THE COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Meetings of the full Council

1.   To be responsible for the planning and preparation of the agenda, papers and other arrangements for meetings of the Council.

2.   To submit recommendations to the Council, as appropriate, as to the appointment of committees and other bodies and as to the functions and membership of such bodies.

3.   To discharge the role of submitting motions to the Council as set out in Standing Order 6 (B) of the Standing Orders relating to the Council and Committees.

Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

4.   To submit recommendations to the Council as to the appointment or nomination of persons to serve on outside bodies (where such

appointments or nominations fall to be made by the full Council) and in cases of urgency (as determined by the Committee), to make such appointments or nominations, subject to reporting the details to the next Council meeting for information.

Civic/Ceremonial

5.   To submit recommendations to the Council, as appropriate, as to the conferment of rights and privileges – e.g. Honorary Alderman, Freedom of the City, etc.

6.   To consider and determine any related matters – e.g. applications to use the City's Coat of Arms.

Constitutional Matters

7.   To oversee all the necessary work (including conducting any necessary Community Governance reviews and dealing with any petition issues) to comply with the Council's Constitutional duties under relevant Local Government Act(s) and to approve Overview & Scrutiny Reports where they have been agreed by the Executive in accordance with Standing Orders.

8.   To keep the Council's Constitutional arrangements under review and to approve any in year changes relating to the non-Executive arrangements of the Constitution.

9.   As part of the Committee's function under 8 above, to submit recommendations to the Council, as and when appropriate, as to the adoption of new or amended Standing Orders.

Members' Services and Allowances

10.   To be responsible for all aspects of services to members.

11.   To keep under review the Council's Allowances Scheme (made under Section 18 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989) and all other matters relating to members' allowances.

12.   To oversee the Council's relationship with the Independent Remuneration Panel and to submit recommendations to the Council, both as to the operation and membership of the Panel and as to amendments to the Allowances Scheme (in conjunction with reports from the Panel).

Electoral Matters, Parish Councils & Boundary Changes

13. To discharge the Council's various electoral duties under the Representation of the People Acts.

14. To discharge the Council's functions, in relation to parishes and parish councils, under Part II of the Local Government & Rating Act 1997 and related Local Government legislation.

15. To discharge the Council's functions under Part IV of the Local Government Act 1972 and Part II of the Local Government Act 1992 (relating to boundary reviews and alterations) and related Local Government legislation.

Appeals & Reviews

16. To oversee, and be responsible for, all arrangements for appeals and reviews (including internal personnel appeals) which fall to the Council to arrange, including the appointment of all necessary appeal and review bodies.

Certain Staff Appointments

17. To be responsible for arrangements relating to the appointment of (a) the Head of the Paid Service, and (b) all other statutory and non-statutory Chief or Deputy Chief Officers designated pursuant to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001. (**NOTE**: A list of the Chief and Deputy Chief Officer posts so designated is appended to the Employee Procedure Rules set out in **Volume B: Part 2** of this Document).

Certain Financial & other Matters

18. To consider any recommendations from the Audit Committee relating to the discharge the Council's duty, under the Accounts & Audits Regulations 1996.

19. To discharge the Council's functions, relating to pensions, under the Superannuation Acts.

20. To authorise the making of payments, under Section 92 of the Local Government Act 2000, on account of maladministration.

21.　To oversee the arrangements for authorising foreign travel by members and officers of the Council (see note below) and to receive general monitoring reports on relevant financial matters.

Specific statutory functions

22.　To exercise the powers, duties and functions of the Council in accordance with relevant legislation.

NOTES:

1.　The Council Business Management Committee is authorised, under Standing Order 24 of the Standing Orders relating to the Council and Committees, to appoint sub-committees for the purposes of its functions relating to **Appeals & Reviews** and **Certain Staff Appointments**, as mentioned in Paragraphs 17 and 18 above.

2.　The following Sub-Committees of the Council Business Management Committee are approved for the current Municipal Year:-

　　(i)　　Appointments
　　(ii)　　Personnel Appeals
　　(iii)　　Education Awards
　　(iv)　　Education Staffing
　　(v)　　Miscellaneous Appeals

3.　The foreign travel arrangements have been delegated to an authorised member of the Council Business Management Committee, who is required to report his/her decisions, on a quarterly basis from December 2002, to the Council Business Management Committee for ratification purposes. For the avoidance of doubt, as the decisions of the authorised member of the Committee are non-Executive decisions, the same can not be 'called-in' by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Agenda Item 5

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

1 Introduction

1.1 The commission recommendations should be considered as whole Package. Whilst they can be implemented individually the commission believes that as a whole they represent a comprehensive solution for the Council Assembly.

1.2 The commission notes that some of the recommendations set out here will require Constitutional changes. And these need to be considered by the Constitutional Steering Panel and a report brought to Council Assembly that sets out the alterations that are required to the constitution for these recommendations to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

1.3 The commission notes that a number of recommendations set out here are likely to have resource implications and these need to be examined by officers. The Commission is mindful of the need to minimise cost or be achievable within existing resources. For most recommendations the changes proposed should have minimal cost. One of the driving factors for these changes is to ensure the maximum benefit for the cost of Council Assembly.

2 The need for change

2.1 That the Commission accepts the need for change and acknowledges that doing nothing is not an option based on the strong body of evidence accompanying this review.

2.2 That the Commission recommendations should be considered together as a whole package to obtain the maximum positive effect.

2.3 That the Commission recommends these changes on the basis of maximising the benefits of the Council Assembly by:

- Increasing the involvement and participation of local people.
- Increasing accountability to local people.
- Discussion of issues relevant to local people.
- Better scrutiny of decision making for the people of the borough.
- Improving the quality of decisions made in the Council Assembly.
- Holding the Administration to Account.

3 PURPOSE The role of the Council Assembly

3.1 The Commission has found a need to set out a clear and easily understood role for the Council Assembly. The commission therefore recommends that the role of the Council Assembly is to:

- Decide on policy framework, strategies plans and policies.
- Debate and inform council plans, priorities and strategies.
- Debate and consider issues of relevance to residents and members.
- Hold the Cabinet to Account.
- Demonstrate community leadership.

3.2 The Commission recommends that the Council actively seeks to:

- Develop its role as a community leader by better community engagement and involvement.

- Strengthen the ability of residents and Elected Members to influence and hold the cabinet to account.

- Enable residents to more easily bring issues of relevance to the Council Assembly.

- Enable the public and members to participate in decision making early enough to influence change; both before and at the Assembly meeting.

The Commission recommends that:

4 In deliberating and deciding policy, plans and strategies,

4.1 The Council Assembly both considers those plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory, and gains the power to decide whether it wishes to consider plans which are currently the preserve of Cabinet on a case by case basis, or whether to devolve them to Cabinet for decision.

4.2 Delete

4.3 Delete

5 In debating and considering issues of relevance to residents and Members,

5.1 Council Assembly may take a petition according to the rules set out by Government. At present 2500 signatures are needed to trigger a debate at Council Assembly. The evidence supported lowering this, and the Constitutional Steering Panel should advise on an appropriate number as soon as possible for decision by the Council Assembly.

5.2 It is made easier to take a deputation to Council Assembly. Three deputations are allowed per meeting on a first come first served basis. Furthermore, more time is given to deputations, deputees are to be allowed to present directly for 3 minutes and ask a question of the Cabinet member/Leader. The relevant Cabinet Members will take responsibility for any follow up work and feedback.

5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings.

5.4 Council Assembly should make allowances for a balanced business agenda and the need to make meetings more engaging. A draft of the Council Assembly agenda to be available to political groups well in advance of the despatch/publishing date.

5.5 Members can bring motions from those agreed by Community Councils to Assembly.

6.0 Monitoring executive functions of the Cabinet as well as its performance

6.1 Members Question Time will continue and be strengthened, with thought given to simplify the rules of debate, introducing parliamentary style questions and allowing the leaders of the opposition parties two supplementary questions

6.2 - Delete – It is important to ensure that the agenda is lead by councillors and local people, rather than by an arbitrary theme. However, if invited by Council Assembly, cabinet members should be willing to take additional questions and take part in debate on their portfolio.

6.3 There may be opportunities to link debates to plans, strategies and policies and where this is the case, they will be clearly signposted to residents and Members so they are able to connect debate to plans and monitor their implementation.

6.4 Scrutiny's role will be enhanced with space on the Assembly agenda to bring reports and recommendations to Assembly for endorsement .

7 Demonstrating community leadership

7.1 The Assembly will seek to involve the wider community in planning debates, to build and strengthen its community leadership role. Alongside this it will provide more opportunities for the community to influence and participate in debate and decisions at an opportune time.

7.2 It is vital that Community Councils are better empowered to carry out their very important community leadership function by devolving as much power as possible to them.

7.3 The following fuctions mentioned in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 for executive decision which could be devolved (wholly or in part) to community councils:

- The making of arrangements under section 20 (questions on police matters at council meetings) of the Police Act 1996 for enabling questions to be put on the discharge of the functions of a police authority.
- Any function relating to contaminated land.
- The discharge of any function relating to the control of pollution or the management of air quality.
- The service of an abatement notice in respect of a statutory nuisance.
- The inspection of the authority's area to detect any statutory nuisance.

- The investigation of any complaint as to the existence of a statutory nuisance.
- The making of agreements for the execution of highways works.

7.4 Functions mentioned in the Liberal Democrat Manifesto for potential devolution:

- All funding for public realm improvements, including routine highways maintenance, street lighting and tree maintenance
- Voluntary sector funding/grants in their area
- TRA Halls
- Monitoring of housing services performance (eg repairs, leasehold charges)
- Questioning/monitoring of LAA partners at a local level (perhaps exercising some scrutiny functions at a local level on questioning local representatives of other public, private and voluntary sector bodies)
- Allotments
- More involvement in the determination of large scale planning applications in their area, that are currently taken by the planning committee
- Build on the role of CCs in local schools (already appoint LEA governors) by increasing their involvement in admissions, exclusions, appeals and the general development of schools (reference powers already available under 1998 schools act mentioned in Democracy Commission agenda – 5th August)

There will be opportunities caused by the Government's Localism Bill, announced in Queen's Speech, to further improve the ability of Council Assembly and Community Councils to provide strong community leadership. The most relevant measures yet announced are:

- Return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils **(beef up powers of Community Councils over planning)**
- New powers to help save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services **(decided by CC or CA, whichever most relevant)**
- Give councils a general power of competence **(shouldn't be solely vested in the cabinet)**
- Give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases **(referenda should be presented to CCs or CA, not cabinet, for decision)**
- Form plans to deliver a genuine and lasting Olympic legacy **(Cabinet under the guidance of CA)**
- Create new trusts that would make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people **(CA)**

The Coalition Agreement also state that:

- We will give councillors the power to vote on large salary packages for unelected council officials **(This should be vested in Council Assembly)**

In addition, we would wish the Democracy Commission to back the government's plans for voting reform for local government in addition to national government, to ensure that members of council assembly are as representative as possible of the community as a whole, and reflects a wider range of political views across the borough.

8 Themed meetings

8.1 Except where necessary (for example, the annual budget setting meeting), meetings of Council Assembly should not be constrained to a particular theme as they are the only opportunity for members of the public and of the council to raise issues of current concern. However, themes will occur naturally on occasion, such as where the Housing Strategy is being considered.

8.2 - Deleted

8.3 - Deleted

8.4 - Deleted

8.5 The Council Assembly should receive a single annual report covering the work of the Community Councils to highlight issues that are of borough wide concern.

9 Format of the Council Assembly meeting

9.1 That each Council Assembly starts with an informal session, this to be up to an hour before the formal start of the meeting. The informal session will be an opportunity to explore any theme, for information about the meeting to be presented in creative ways and for residents to mix with Members in an informal setting.

9.2 During these informal sessions officers provide sufficient information papers about the meeting in plain English outlining the agenda of the meeting and the way the meeting is conducted. Also to make available sheets explaining how the Council and Council Assembly works and the role of the Councillors.

9.3 That an officer from the constitutional team is present in the informal session to explain the process and the paper work. The information screens in the Assembly Meeting should provide better information such as the speakers name, the ward they represent, political group and position if Cabinet member.

9.4 That the outcome of the meeting should be available in Plain English and accessible format and published on the Councils' website. And this should form the basis of any feedback to the residents at the following Council Assembly.

9.5 See appendix for suggested outline of a Council assembly meeting format

10.0 - Deleted – It is vital that Council Assembly agendas are a function of issues of current concern for both local residents, and all members of the council, as well as necessary council business. Council Assembly is the principal opportunity for individual, particularly non-executive, councillors to raise issues of concern to them. Any move to constrain this ability, or to give control of agendas to a small clique must be avoided.

10.1 - Deleted

10.2 - Deleted

10.3 - Deleted

11 MEETING CONTENT

11.1 Cabinet lead Members could be called by Council Assembly to present reports on their work and their vision, priorities and plans for the future. They will already have conducted engagement activities involving residents intended to inform policy development on their theme at Community Councils and in other fora. Residents could have the right to ask pre-submitted questions to this item on the agenda.

11.2 The Mayor to have more discretionary power in debate and allow interjections during discussions if there is a relevant point to be added to the discussions. Debating rules will be simplified. This item to be kept under review by the Council Assembly Business Panel and to offer changes if it does not elicit good behaviour.

12 Times and venues for Council Assembly (The timing and locations must take into account the fact that a majority of councillors have full time jobs, and many also have families, making both daytime and weekend meetings challenging)

12.1 The Commission recommends that the times of the Council Assembly be altered from previous times for the different themed meetings to cater for a meeting held for young people in partnership with the Youth Council, or for a themed meeting on Adult Social Care which would particularly appeal to older people.

12.2 That the budgetary meeting in (January or February) may be held on a Saturday afternoon to enable a larger cross-section of residents to attend.

12.3 The commission recommends that the Council Assembly ceases meeting in the current Council Chamber and has its meetings in other venues around the borough. (**While we understand that the chamber is not entirely suitable, particularly for disabled access, this should not be used as an excuse to dispose of the Town Hall**)

12.4 That the officers working on the current accommodation strategy explore this recommendation and the special requirements outlined in this report and present suitable alternative venues. The officers work out the costs of the various options available for the complete cycle of Council Assembly meetings including the cost of the current Council Chamber.

13 COMMUNICATION and using new technology

13.1 The Commission recommends engaging the media by providing

media briefings before the meetings. These should be briefings by officers on the information role only and the Members on the opinion and values. Updates, briefings and alerts could go out to all media and local online community websites.

13.2 That all documents are published online before the meeting or soon after (with a summary decision sheet) so media outlets have all the documents on hand.

13.3 That the rules on the recording of audio are relaxed and all audio recording of the proceedings in Council Assembly be allowed.

13.4 That podcasts be released on the Council's website from recordings of the sound system.

13.5 That wireless access is enabled in any meeting venue that houses Council Assembly to enable tweeting and posting online.

13.6 That better use of the Council's existing communication platforms and networks is undertaken. A better explanation of the Council Assembly should appear on Southwark media; Southwark Life and on the web including dates and announced in advance, summaries of the meeting, and the calls for questions. Updates, briefings and summaries and alerts should go out to community networks (Southwark Life, TRAs, Forums, social media Sites, newspapers).

13.7 Text / Facebook / Twitter /Assembly newsletter updates and invites should go to those residents signed up to Southwark platforms or there could be an option to join a specific list. Cost effective posting of important debates and decisions could have limited 'clips.'

13.8 Targeted promotion for specific debates should be considered when at all practical – i.e. regeneration of a particular area would lead to invitations to local groups and people; a debate on Housing would target local TRAs etc.

13.9 It is recommended that the costs for webcasting and TV broadcasting are looked into alongside the opportunities for using venues with built in facilities (e.g. the London Assembly debating chamber at the GLA).

14 Community Education

14.1 That there should be better information through the existing channels for better awareness and understanding of the Council Assembly, the workings of the Council in general, and the role of the Councillors in particular for the residents of the borough. Training, mentoring and citizenships class should all be promoted so residents have the skills, knowledge and support to get involved.

15.   Equalities issues

15.1 The Democracy Commission has been set up with the aim of bringing the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. And these recommendations are primarily aimed at achieving that aim. Any implementation plan should include a full Equality and Community Impact Assessment.

15.2 Council Assembly will need to think carefully about how it works with existing equalities groups to enable wider participation

15.3 Consideration should be given to training for officers and members in community engagement and how to ensure openness to community influence.

16.   Next Steps

16.1   Following the acceptance of these recommendations, the Chair of the Democracy Commission to report back to the next meeting of the Council Assembly with a full implementation plan including any resource implications.

16.2   Also the Council Assembly requests that a report is brought to the next Council Assembly to outline how the Council Constitution will be altered to enable these changes to be implemented.

16.3 The Democracy commission as currently constituted oversees and assists the development of the implementation plan.

16.4 That the Democracy Commission reviews the implementation of the agreed recommendations after 12 months after these changes have been fully implemented and to work to for further improvements.

Appendix 1

MEETING FORMAT

<u>**Preparation**</u>

Prior to the themed debate taking place outreach would take place by Cabinet Members visiting Community Councils and other community forums on set themes in the weeks prior to the event. There may also be other engagement work to support this – **This implies a top down approach. It is vital that Community Councils have control over their own agendas and programmes of work – it must not be for Cabinet Members to lead this type of engagement, but for Community Councils. If local communities and their councillors wish to invite Cabinet Members to their meetings, they will do so.**

<u>**Meeting**</u>

Informal start

30 minute informal 'meet the Assembly session' prior to the meeting start. – **If this takes place, it must be for the general benefit of members of the public – giving them an opportunity to talk informally with members of the council, rather than as an opportunity for members of the cabinet to present information to them.**

It would give an opportunity for the public to informally discuss issues with Members and the wider community.

Formal meeting

This is an outline guide to timings; it is recommended this is given to the CSP for more work. The Council Business Committee too would most likely need to adjust the timings by deciding the priority of each meeting. The meeting will last for no longer than three hours (subject to guillotine on debating formal reports for decision). – **We do not believe that a guide is necessary, nor the proper role of the Commission – it is vital that agendas are left as free and unrestricted as possible to avoid discouraging engagement. It is also important to recognise that everything mentioned below is already possible given the existing procedure rules listed in the constitution.**

1. **Time for residents to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly** – would need to find a balance between quality over quantity & accessibility

   30 - 45 minutes for deputations and petitions from the public. – **Residents already have this right, and it is rightly already at the top of the agenda.**

2. **Time for Members to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly**

   20 - 45 minutes for Members to bring <u>topical</u> motions, motions from Community Council and ask parliamentary style questions – **Members already have the right to ask questions and motions towards the beginning of the meeting, but we are worried about the suggestion that 20-45 minutes are devoted to questions and to motions, a marked reduction on the current situation. It is vital that any areas**

of the agenda devoted to allowing individual members of the council, and of the public, to raise concerns are maximised rather than reduced.

3. Themed debated centred on Cabinet member's portfolios - 1 hour for themed debate

- 10 minutes for Cabinet lead to present vision, priorities and plan for the year

- 15 minutes for public pre submitted questions

- 30 minutes for Member's motions and questions on the Cabinet theme using present principles to allow sufficient political balance and political parties to hold Cabinet to account. – **As already mentioned, we do not believe that themed meetings are necessary, and are in fact in danger of constraining the meetings to the detriment of individual members' ability to raise issues of current concern that do not fit with an arbitrarily chosen theme. Should Council Assembly wish to question a cabinet member, it should have the right to do so but it should not be forced to.**

4. **Scrutiny reports** (max 10 - 30 minutes) This slot would be reserved for occasional engaging and appropriate reports (freedom pass, food strategy) – **Scrutiny reports can already come to Council Assembly – specifying a time slot is unnecessary.**

5. **Formal constitutional business** (normally 10-30 minutes but the whole meeting in case of deciding the budget). This may be able to be reduced further if some reports are removed but would expand if Members wanted to Council assembly in future to consider additional policies for decisions – bearing in mind legal constraints may make this difficult. – **Formal business also already comes to Council Assembly. Specifying a time slot is unnecessary.**

Cllr Michael Mitchell

Proposed changes and reasons for changes to the draft recommendations of the Democracy Commission as set out on Page 7 of the Agenda Friday 1st October.

Overview

There is general agreement that Council Assembly will be better attended and the people of Southwark will be more engaged with it if it has more decision making powers and is involved in the decision making process at an earlier stage than at present.

I have therefore amended Paragraph 4 to try and reflect that.

I am not convinced of the merits of the Council Assembly Business Panel (CABP) and have therefore deleted and amended the document to be consistent with that view.

On balance I disagree with the proposal to move the Council Assembly away from the Town Hall. I recognise the drawbacks with the present chamber but I do not believe they are sufficient to make us appear homeless and rootless as a body.

Changes

No changes to Paragraphs 1,2 and 3

Para 4 delete 4.1 and 4.2 and insert

4.1 In addition to all the plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory for the Council Assembly to consider it will debate and make recommendations on all plans and strategies referred by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), the Cabinet and the Constitutional Steering Panel.

Para 5.1 delete the last sentence and insert "This figure should be lowered to 1,000.

Para 5.3 delete the last sentence. (References to CABP)

Para 5.4 delete. (Deals with CABP)

No changes to Paragraph 7.

Paragraph 8 delete those sections which refer to the CABP namely 8.3, 8.4f)

No changes to Paragraph 9.

Delete Paragraph 10 entirely as it deals with the creation of the CABP.

Para 11.2 delete "Council Assembly Business Panel" and insert "Constitutional Steering Panel".

Para 12. Delete Paras 12.3 and 12.4 as they deal with moving Council Assembly from the Town Hall.

No changes to Paragraphs 13 and 14.

Para 15.2. Delete as it refers to the CABP.

No changes to Paragraph 16 and Appendix 1.

I hope this submission is helpful in allowing us to reach a speedy resolution at our meeting on Friday.

Southwark Democracy Commission

Recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 The commission recommendations should be considered as a whole Package. Whilst they can be implemented individually the commission believes that as a whole they represent a comprehensive solution for Council Assembly.

1.2 The commission notes that some of the recommendations set out here will require Constitutional changes. These need to be considered by the Constitutional Steering Panel and a report brought to Council Assembly that sets out the alterations that are required to the constitution for these recommendations to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

1.3 The commission notes that a number of recommendations set out here are likely to have resource implications and these need to be examined by officers. The Commission is mindful of the need to minimise cost for these recommendations to be achievable within existing resources. For most recommendations the changes proposed should have minimal cost. One of the driving factors for these changes is to ensure the maximum benefit for the cost of Council Assembly.

2. The need for change

2.1 That the Commission accepts the need for change and acknowledges that doing nothing is not an option based on the strong body of evidence accompanying this review.

2.2 That the Commission recommendations should be considered together as a whole package to obtain the maximum positive effect.

2.3 That the Commission recommends these changes on the basis of maximising the benefits of the Council Assembly by:

- Increasing the involvement and participation of local people.
- Increasing accountability to local people.
- Discussion of issues relevant to local people.
- Better scrutiny of decision making for the people of the borough.
- Improving the quality of decisions made in the Council Assembly.
- Holding the Administration to Account.

3. Purpose: the role of the Council Assembly

3.1 The Commission has found a need to set out a clear and easily understood role for the Council Assembly. The commission therefore recommends that the role of the Council Assembly is to:

- Decide on policy framework, strategies plans and policies.
- Debate and inform council plans, priorities and strategies.
- Debate and consider issues of relevance to residents and members.
- Hold the Cabinet to Account.
- Demonstrate community leadership.

3.2 The Commission recommends that the Council actively seeks to:

- Develop its role as a community leader by better community engagement and involvement.
- Strengthen the ability of residents and Elected Members to influence and hold the cabinet to account.
- Enable residents to more easily bring issues of relevance to the Council Assembly.
- Enable the public and members to participate in decision making early enough to influence change; both before and at the Assembly meeting.

The Commission recommends that:

4. In deliberating and deciding policy, plans and strategies,

4.1 The Council Assembly considers those plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory with the rest of these being considered by the Cabinet.

4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) can recommend more plans or strategies to the Council Assembly for debate and recommendation. The Constitutional Steering Panel will be asked to consider if there are additional plans that could be decided by Council Assembly.

4.3 The Council Assembly adopts the use of themes, related to Cabinet portfolios, to develop and inform the Councils (and related bodies), priorities, plans and strategies.

5. In debating and considering issues of relevance to residents and Members,

5.1 Council Assembly may take a petition according to the rules set out by Government. At present 2,500 signatures are needed to trigger a debate at Council Assembly. The evidence supported lowering this, and the Constitutional Steering Panel should advise on an appropriate number as soon as possible for decision by the Council Assembly. We recommend 1,000 be this trigger.

5.2 It is made easier to take a deputation to Council Assembly. Three deputations are allowed per meeting on a first come first served basis. Furthermore, more time is given to deputations, deputees are to be allowed to present directly for 3 minutes and ask a

question of the Cabinet member/Leader. The relevant Cabinet Members will take responsibility for any follow up work and feedback.

5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings. The Council Assembly Business Panel is to advise the Mayor and his officers according to the principles outlined in 8.4

5.4 The Council Assembly Business Panel should make allowances for a balanced business agenda and the need to make meetings more engaging. A draft of the Council Assembly agenda shall be available to political groups well in advance of the despatch/publishing date.

6. Monitoring executive functions of the Cabinet as well as its performance

6.1 Members Question Time will continue and be strengthened, with thought given to simplify the rules of debate, introducing parliamentary style questions and allowing the leaders of the opposition parties' two supplementary questions.

6.2 Groups and independent Councillors will be continue to submit questions in the existing manner; these must be topical and relevant. There will be a time limit for this section of the agenda. Community Councils Chairs will also be permitted to ask questions on behalf of their Community Council. The leader of the opposition will be allowed two supplementary questions. The CSP will be tasked with devising suitable rules to implement this recommendation.

6.3 Cabinet Members will lead themed debate and will take motions and questions from Members on their portfolio.

6.4 Themed debates in the informal section will be linked to plans, strategies and polices and this will be clearly signposted to residents and Members so they are able to connect debate to plans and monitor their implementation.

6.5 Scrutiny's role will be enhanced with space on the Assembly agenda to bring reports and recommendations to Assembly for endorsement (final decision must rest with the Cabinet).

7. Demonstrating community leadership

7.1 The Assembly will seek to involve the wider community in planning debates, to build and strengthen its community leadership role. Alongside this it will provide more opportunities for the community to influence and participate in debate and decisions at an opportune time.

8. Themed meetings

8.1 In order to achieve the above aims the Commission recommends that each year the seven Council Assembly meetings have a themed aspect as follows:

- Annual State of the Borough meeting.

- Constitutional and Mayor-making.
- Budget meeting.

Four further themed meetings focused on a Cabinet member's portfolio following certain principles (detailed later) but can vary:

Example of themes might be:

- Finances and resources - to inform the annual Budget setting meeting.
- Young people, children's and families meeting (held with Southwark Youth Council).
- Adult Social Care.
- Housing.
- Regeneration.

8.2 Cabinet Members will involve residents at Community Council and other forums (such as Scrutiny) sometime before they come to Council assembly on the set themes. Participatory formats such as workshops and committee discussion will be used on these occasions. An example is the current consultation on the budgetary process in preparation (for a themed debate in January on Budget, Finances and Resources) for final decision in February.

8.3 A Council Assembly Business Panel will be established (see below).

8.4 Themes will be chosen bearing in mind the following principles:

a) Accountable led by Cabinet member and directly related to their portfolio. This is the first and most important principle.

b) Relevant and local to the public and able to resonate with them - not too specific and technical and not too broad so the meeting is unfocused.

c) Suitable for Community Council themed meetings or other participatory events leading up to and informing the Assembly meeting.

d) Useful - an issue that the Cabinet wants feedback and involvement on.

e) Related to plans and strategies - choosing ones that the Council is already devising and consulting on or refreshing existing ones(Enterprise and Employment / Independence and Wellbeing / Children's and Young Peoples plan for example).

f) Partnership that outside community leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers are invited to attend Council Business Panel meetings in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes. (Organisations that have a representative structure or are constituted groups that have representation on Scrutiny Committees would be prioritised– i.e. Southwark Youth Council, Tenant Management Council etc).

g) Involvement and participation. That relevant partnership groups / constituency groups are invited to Council Assembly. Groups may be invited to actively participate before, during and after by assisting with consultation, presenting information and doing follow up work; There would be a flexible and creative approached so, for example, the Youth Council may want to do a presentation or a

Pensioners group show a film, a Scrutiny Committee may want to do detailed policy work on issues raised.

h) Measurable with Feedback and Follow-up That following on from the Assembly meeting on a theme the residents and the community would be signposted to the plans, strategies and policies that the debates had impacted on. They would also be made aware of the ongoing partnership groups that take these polices forward, representatives that sit on these bodies (elected Members, constituency representative, community representative) and how they can continue to influence and monitor these plans .

i) The choice of themes should be subject to proportionality allocated among political parties.

8.5 The Council Assembly should receive a single annual report covering the work of the Community Councils to highlight issues that are of borough wide concern.

9. Format of the Council Assembly meeting

9.1 That each Council Assembly starts with an informal session, this to be up to an hour before the formal start of the meeting. The informal session will be an opportunity for information on the theme to be presented in creative ways and for residents to mix with Members and the community in an informal setting.

9.2 During these informal sessions officers provide sufficient information papers about the meeting in plain English outlining the agenda of the meeting and the way the meeting is conducted. Also to make available sheets explaining how the Council and Council Assembly works and the role of the Councillors.

9.3 That an officer from the constitutional team is present in the informal session to explain the process and the paper work. The information screens in the Assembly Meeting should provide better information such as the speakers name, the ward they represent, political group and position if Cabinet member.

9.4 That the outcome of the meeting should be available in Plain English and accessible format and published on the Councils' website. And this should form the basis of any feedback to the residents at the following Council Assembly.

9.5 See appendix for suggested outline of a Council assembly meeting format

10. Council Assembly Business Panel

10.1 The Commission recommends that a Council Assembly Business Panel be set up. This Council Assembly Business Panel is to be responsible for planning the Council Assembly's agenda as an advisory panel to the Mayor. The Panel will plan the annual agenda for up to a year of programmes for policy, budgetary framework development, themes, community leadership items and the content of informal sessions. These themed meetings to have a minimum of two months notice.

10.2 The mayor has the ultimate responsibility for deciding on the Council Assembly business and will be advised by the Council Assembly Business Panel.

10.3 The Council Assembly Business Panel to be chaired by the Mayor. The composition of the Panel should be one representative from each political group on the Council. It will have the ability to seek advice from community leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers as required who will act in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes.

10.4 The Council Assembly Business Panel takes into account a balance between items of business promoting participative democracy (community engagement) and representative democracy (getting more out of elected members).

11. Meeting Content

11.1 At themed Council Assembly meetings Cabinet lead Members are to be called to present annual reports on their work and their vision, priorities and plans for the future, for adoption. They will already have conducted engagement activities involving residents intended to inform policy development on their theme at Community Councils and in other fora. Residents will have the right to ask pre-submitted questions to this item on the agenda.

11.2 The Mayor to have more discretionary power in debate and allow interjections during discussions if there is a relevant point to be added to the discussions. Debating rules will be simplified. This item to be kept under review by the Council Assembly Business Panel and to offer changes if it does not elicit good behaviour.

12. Times and venues for Council Assembly

12.1 The Commission recommends that the times of the Council Assembly be altered from previous times for the different themed meetings to cater for a meeting held for young people in partnership with the Youth Council, or for a slightly earlier or daytime themed meeting on Adult Social Care which could particularly appeal to older people.

12.2 That the budgetary meeting in (January or February) may be held on a Saturday afternoon to enable a larger cross-section of residents to attend.

12.3 The commission recommends that future Council Assembly Meetings be alternated between suitable venues throughout Southwark. The suitability of a venue to be screened under an appropriate Equality and Community Impact Assessment. This EQIA and CIA will also include the current Town Hall Chamber being reviewed for its suitability. The criteria for a suitable venue to be based upon maximum participation and involvement by the community

12.4 That the officers working on the current accommodation strategy explore this recommendation and the special requirements outlined in this report and present suitable alternative venues. The officers work out the costs of the various options available for the complete cycle of Council Assembly meetings including the cost of the current Council Chamber.

13. Communictaion and using new technology

13.1 The Commission recommends engaging the media by providing media briefings before the meetings. These should be briefings by officers on the information role only and the Members on the opinion and values. Updates, briefings and alerts could go out to all media and local online community websites.

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14.1 That there should be better information through the existing channels for better awareness and understanding of the Council Assembly, the workings of the Council in general, and the role of the Councillors in particular for the residents of the borough. Training, mentoring and citizenships class should all be promoted so residents have the skills, knowledge and support to get involved.

15. Equalities issues

15.1 The Democracy Commission has been set up with the aim of bringing the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. And these recommendations are primarily aimed at achieving that aim. Any implementation plan should include a full Equality and Community Impact Assessment.

15.2 The Council Assembly Business Panel will need to think carefully about how it works with existing equalities groups to enable wider participation

15.3 Consideration should be given to training for officers and members in community engagement and how to ensure openness to community influence.

16. Next Steps

16.1 Following the acceptance of these recommendations, the Chair of the Democracy Commission to report back to the next meeting of the Council Assembly with a full implementation plan including any resource implications.

16.2 Also the Council Assembly requests that a report is brought to the next Council Assembly to outline how the Council Constitution will be altered to enable these changes to be implemented.

16.3 The Democracy commission oversees and assists the development of the implementation plan.

16.4 That the Democracy Commission reviews the implementation of the agreed recommendations after 12 months after these changes have been fully implemented and to work to for further improvements.

Appendix 1

MEETING FORMAT

This meeting format emphasises topical and themed debated.

Preparation

Prior to the themed debate taking place outreach would take place by Cabinet Members visiting Community Councils and other community forums on set themes in the weeks prior to the event. There may also be other engagement work to support this

Meeting

Informal start

30 minute informal 'meet the Assembly session' prior to the meeting start.

This would informally present the information gathered from Community Councils etc and report on the Members vision, by for, example displays There may be a presentation by a community group – for example the Youth Council. This space would emphasis creative and informal ways of communicating.

It would give an opportunity for the public to informally discuss issues with Members and the wider community.

Formal meeting

This is an outline guide to timings; it is recommended this is given to the CSP for more work. The Council Business Panel would most likely need to adjust the timings by deciding the priority of each meeting. The meeting will last for no longer than three hours (subject to guillotine on debating formal reports for decision).

1. **Time for residents to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly** – would need to find a balance between quality over quantity & accessibility
30 - 45 minutes for deputations and petitions from the public.

2. **Themed debated centred on Cabinet member's portfolios - 1 hour for themed debate**
   - 10 minutes for Cabinet lead to present vision, priorities and plan for the year
   - 15 minutes for public pre submitted questions
   - 30 minutes for Member's motions and questions on the Cabinet theme using present principles to allow sufficient political balance and political parties to hold Cabinet to account.

 3 **Time for Members to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly**

   20 - 45 minutes for Members to bring topical motions, motions from Community Council and ask parliamentary style questions

4. **Scrutiny reports** (max 10 - 30 minutes). This slot would be reserved for occasional engaging and appropriate reports (e.g. freedom passes, food strategy)

5. **Formal constitutional business** (normally 10-30 minutes but the whole meeting in case of deciding the budget). This may be able to be reduced further if some reports are removed but would expand if Members wanted to Council assembly in future to consider additional policies for decisions – bearing in mind legal constraints may make this difficult.

SOUTHWARK DEMOCRACY COMMISSION	
Title	Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations
Report author	Stephen Douglass
Date	08 October 2010

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   That the Democracy Commission agrees those recommendations (34 in total) where no amendments have been suggested as follows:

- 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
- 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
- 3.1, 3.2
- 5.2, 5.5
- 6.1
- 7.1
- 8.5
- 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5
- 12.2
- 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4, 13.5, 13.6, 13.7, 13.8, 13.9
- 14.1
- 15.1, 15.3
- 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4

2.   That the Democracy Commission considers and decides on the following recommendations (27 in total) where amendments have been suggested as follows :

- 4.1, 4.2, 4.3
- 5.1, 5.3, 5.4
- 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4
- 7.2, 7.3, 7.4
- 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4
- 9.1
- 10.1, 10.2, 10.3
- 11.1, 11.2
- 12.1, 12.3, 12.4
- 15.2

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The attached table shows the recommendations considered by the Commission on 23rd September including the amendments agreed at that meeting. The last three columns of the table show proposed amendments (underlined) and comments (italicised). Where no changes were suggested this is indicated in the table and the rows are shaded.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
1. Introduction			
1.1 The commission recommendations should be considered as a whole Package. Whilst they can be implemented individually the commission believes that as a whole they represent a comprehensive solution for the Council Assembly.	None.	None.	None.
1.2 The commission notes that some of the recommendations set out here will require. Constitutional changes. And these need to be considered by the Constitutional Steering Panel and a report brought to Council Assembly that sets out the alterations that are required to the constitution for these recommendations to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.	None.	None.	None.
1.3 The commission notes that a number of recommendations set out here are likely to have resource implications and these need to be examined by officers. The Commission is mindful of the need to minimise cost or be achievable within existing resources. For most recommendations the changes	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
proposed should have minimal cost. One of the driving factors for these changes is to ensure the maximum benefit for the cost of Council Assembly.			
2 The need for change			
2.1 That the commission accepts the need for change and acknowledges that doing nothing is not an option based on the strong body of evidence accompanying this review.	None	None	None.
2.2 That the Commission recommendations should be considered together as a whole package to obtain the maximum positive effect.	None	None	None.
2.3 That the Commission recommends these changes on the basis of maximising the benefits of the Council Assembly by: • Increasing the involvement and participation of local people. • Increasing accountability to local people. • Discussion of issues relevant to local people. • Better scrutiny of decision making for the people of the	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
borough. • Improving the quality of decisions made in the Council Assembly. • Holding the Administration to Account			
3. PURPOSE The role of the Council Assembly			
3.1 The Commission has found a need to set out a clear and easily understood role for the Council Assembly. The commission therefore recommends that the role of the Council Assembly is to: • Decide on policy framework, strategies plans and policies. • Debate and inform council plans, priorities and strategies. • Debate and consider issues of relevance to residents and members. • Hold the Cabinet to Account. • Demonstrate community leadership.	None	None	None.
3.2 The Commission recommends that the Council actively seeks to: • Develop its role as a community leader by better community engagement and involvement. • Strengthen the ability of residents and Elected	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
Members to influence and hold the cabinet to account. • Enable residents to more easily bring issues of relevance to the Council Assembly. • Enable the public and members to participate in decision making early enough to influence change; both before and at the Assembly meeting.			
4. In deliberating and deciding policy, plans and strategies			
4.1 The Council Assembly only considers those plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory with the rest of these being considered by the Cabinet.	In addition to all the plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory for the Council Assembly to consider it will debate and make recommendations on all plans and strategies referred by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), the Cabinet and the Constitutional Steering Panel. *There is general agreement that Council Assembly will be better attended and the people of Southwark will be more engaged with it if it has more decision making powers and is involved in the decision making process at an earlier stage than at present.*	The Council Assembly both considers those plans and strategies that the Government through the legal framework makes mandatory, and gains the power to decide whether it wishes to consider plans which are currently the preserve of Cabinet on a case by case basis, or whether to devolve them to Cabinet for decision.	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
	I have therefore amended Paragraph 4 to try and reflect that.		
4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) can refer more plans or strategies to the Council Assembly for debate and recommendation. The Constitutional Steering Panel will be asked to consider if there are additional plans that could be decided by Council Assembly.	Delete.	Delete	None.
4.3 The Council Assembly adopts the use of themes, related to Cabinet portfolios, to develop and inform the Councils (and related bodies), priorities, plans and strategies.	None	Delete	None.
5 In debating and considering issues of relevance to residents and Members			
5.1 Council Assembly may take a petition according to the rules set out by Government. At present 2500 signatures are needed to trigger a debate at Council Assembly. The evidence supported lowering this, and the Constitutional Steering Panel should advise on an appropriate number as soon as possible for decision by the Council Assembly.	5.1 Council Assembly may take a petition according to the rules set out by Government. At present 2500 signatures are needed to trigger a debate at Council Assembly. This figure should be lowered to 1,000.	None	5.1 Council Assembly may take a petition according to the rules set out by Government. At present 2500 signatures are needed to trigger a debate at Council Assembly. The evidence supported lowering this, and the Constitutional Steering Panel should advise on an appropriate number as soon as possible for decision by the Council Assembly. We recommend 1,000 be this trigger.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
5.2 It is made easier to take a deputation to Council Assembly. Three deputations are allowed per meeting on a first come first served basis and this is reviewed by the Council Assembly Business Panel within a reasonable timeframe. Furthermore, more time is given to deputations, deputees are to be allowed to present directly for 3 minutes and ask a question of the Cabinet member/Leader. The relevant Cabinet Members will take responsibility for any follow up work and feedback.	None	None	None.
5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings. The Council Assembly Business Panel is to advise on the relevance and appropriateness of motions to proposers and their groups, given the consensus attached to the relevance of motions to the Council Assembly responsibilities.	5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings.	5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings.	5.3 The existing arrangements will continue to apply for taking and discussing Motions at the meetings. The Council Assembly Business Panel is to advise the Mayor and his officers according to the principles outlined in 8.4
5.4 The Council Assembly Business Panel should make allowances for a balanced	Delete.	5.4 Council Assembly should make allowances for a balanced business agenda and the need to	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
business agenda and the need to make meetings more engaging. A draft of the Council Assembly agenda to be available to political groups well in advance of the despatch/publishing date.		make meetings more engaging. A draft of the Council Assembly agenda to be available to political groups well in advance of the despatch/publishing date.	
5.5 Members can bring motions from those agreed by Community Councils to Assembly.	None	None	None.
6.0 Monitoring executive functions of the Cabinet as well as its performance			
6.1 Members Question Time will continue and be strengthened, with thought given to simplify the rules of debate, introducing parliamentary style questions and allowing the leaders of the opposition parties two supplementary questions	None	None	6.1 None
6.2 Cabinet Members will lead themed debate and will take motions and questions from Members on their portfolio. They will also take questions from residents and this opportunity will be actively promoted. ?	None ?	Delete ?	6.2 Cabinet Members will lead themed debate and will take motions and questions from Members on their portfolio. 6.22 NEW Groups and independent Councillors will be continue to submit questions in the existing manner; these must be topical and relevant. There will be a time limit for this section of the agenda. Community Councils Chairs will also be permitted to ask questions on

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
			behalf of their Community Council. The leader of the opposition will be allowed two supplementary questions. The CSP will be tasked with devising suitable rules to implement this recommendation.
6.3 Themed debates will be linked to plans, strategies and polices and this will be clearly signposted to residents and Members so they are able connect debate to plans and monitor their implementation.	None	6.3 There may be opportunities to link debates to plans, strategies and policies and where this is the case, they will be clearly signposted to residents and Members so they are able to connect debate to plans and monitor their implementation.	None.
6.4 Scrutiny's role will be enhanced with space on the Assembly agenda to bring reports and recommendations to Assembly for endorsement (final decision must rest with Cabinet).	None	6.4 Scrutiny's role will be enhanced with space on the Assembly agenda to bring reports and recommendations to Assembly for endorsement.	None.
7 Demonstrating community leadership			
7.1The Assembly will seek to involve the wider community in planning debates, to build and strengthen its community leadership role. Alongside this it will provide more opportunities for the community to influence and participate in debate and decisions	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
at an opportune time.			
		7.2 It is vital that Community Councils are better empowered to carry out their very important community leadership function by devolving as much power as possible to them.	
		7.3 The following functions mentioned in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 for executive decision which could be devolved (wholly or in part) to community councils: • The making of arrangements under section 20 (questions on police matters at council meetings) of the Police Act 1996 for enabling questions to be put on the discharge of the functions of a police authority. • Any function relating to contaminated land. • The discharge of any function relating to the control of pollution or the management of air quality. • The service of an abatement notice in respect of a statutory nuisance.	

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Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
		- The inspection of the authority's area to detect any statutory nuisance. - The investigation of any complaint as to the existence of a statutory nuisance. - The making of agreements for the execution of highways works.	
		7.4 Functions mentioned in the Liberal Democrat Manifesto for potential devolution: - All funding for public realm improvements, including routine highways maintenance, street lighting and tree maintenance - Voluntary sector funding/grants in their area - TRA Halls - Monitoring of housing services performance (eg repairs, leasehold charges) - Questioning/monitoring of LAA partners at a local level (perhaps exercising some scrutiny functions at a local level on questioning local representatives of other public, private and voluntary	

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
46		sector bodies) • Allotments • More involvement in the determination of large scale planning applications in their area, that are currently taken by the planning committee • Build on the role of CCs in local schools (already appoint LEA governors) by increasing their involvement in admissions, exclusions, appeals and the general development of schools (reference powers already available under 1998 schools act mentioned in Democracy Commission agenda – 5th August) There will be opportunities caused by the Government's Localism Bill, announced in Queen's Speech, to further improve the ability of Council Assembly and Community Councils to provide strong community leadership. The most relevant measures yet announced are: • Return decision-making	46

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
47		powers on housing and planning to local councils *(beef up powers of Community Councils over planning)* • New powers to help save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services *(decided by CC or CA, whichever most relevant)* • Give councils a general power of competence *(shouldn't be solely vested in the cabinet)* • Give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases *(referenda should be presented to CCs or CA, not cabinet, for decision)* • Form plans to deliver a genuine and lasting Olympic legacy *(Cabinet under the guidance of CA)* • Create new trusts that would make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people *(CA*	47

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
		<u>The Coalition Agreement also states that:</u> • <u>We will give councillors the power to vote on large salary packages for unelected council officials</u> *(This should be vested in Council Assembly)* <u>In addition, we would wish the Democracy Commission to back the government's plans for voting reform for local government in addition to national government, to ensure that members of council assembly are as representative as possible of the community as a whole, and reflects a wider range of political views across the borough.</u>	
8 Themed meetings			
8.1 In order to achieve the above aims the Commission recommends that each year the seven Council Assembly meetings have a themed aspect as follows: • Annual State of the Borough meeting • Constitutional and Mayor-making	None	<u>8.1 Except where necessary (for example, the annual budget setting meeting), meetings of Council Assembly should not be constrained to a particular theme as they are the only opportunity for members of the public and of the council to raise issues of current</u>	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
• Budget meeting Four further themed meetings focused on a Cabinet member's portfolio following certain principles (detailed later) but can vary Example of themes might be: • Finances and resources - to inform the annual Budget setting meeting. • Young people, children's and families meeting (held with Southwark Youth Council). • Adult Social Care. • Housing. • Regeneration.		concern. However, themes will occur naturally on occasion, such as where the Housing Strategy is being considered.	
8.2 Cabinet Members will involve residents at Community Council and other forums (such as Scrutiny) sometime before they come to Council assembly on the set themes. Participatory formats such as workshops and committee discussion will be used on these occasions. An example is the current consultation on the budgetary process in preparation (for a themed debate in January on Budget, Finances and Resources) for final decision in February.	None	Delete	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
8.3 A Council Assembly Business Panel will be established (see below).	<u>Delete</u> *I am not convinced of the merits of the Council Assembly Business Panel (CABP) and have therefore deleted and amended the document to be consistent with that view.*	<u>Delete</u>	None.
8.4 Themes will be chosen bearing in mind the following principles: a) **Accountable** led by Cabinet member and directly related to their portfolio. This is the first and most important principle. b) **Relevant** to the public and able to resonate with them - not too specific and technical and not too broad so the meeting is unfocused. c) **Suitable** for Community Council themed meetings or other participatory events leading up to and informing the Assembly meeting. d) **Useful -** an issue that the Cabinet wants feedback and involvement on. e) **Related to plans and strategies** - choosing ones that the Council is already devising and consulting on or refreshing existing ones(Enterprise and Employment / Independence and Wellbeing / Children's and Young Peoples plan for example). f) **Partnership** that outside community leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers are invited to attend	8.4 Themes will be chosen bearing in mind the following principles: a) **Accountable** led by Cabinet member and directly related to their portfolio. This is the first and most important principle. b) **Relevant** to the public and able to resonate with them - not too specific and technical and not too broad so the meeting is unfocused. c) **Suitable** for Community Council themed meetings or other participatory events leading up to and informing the Assembly meeting. d) **Useful -** an issue that the Cabinet wants feedback and involvement on. e) **Related to plans and strategies** - choosing ones that the Council is already devising and consulting on or refreshing existing ones(Enterprise and Employment / Independence and Wellbeing / Children's and Young Peoples plan for example).	<u>Delete</u>	8.4 Themes will be chosen bearing in mind the following principles: a) **Accountable** led by Cabinet member and directly related to their portfolio. This is the first and most important principle. b) **Relevant** <u>and local</u> to the public and able to resonate with them - not too specific and technical and not too broad so the meeting is unfocused. c) **Suitable** for Community Council themed meetings or other participatory events leading up to and informing the Assembly meeting. d) **Useful -** an issue that the Cabinet wants feedback and involvement on. e) **Related to plans and strategies** - choosing ones that the Council is already devising and consulting on or refreshing existing ones(Enterprise and Employment / Independence and Wellbeing / Children's and Young Peoples plan for example). f) **Partnership** that outside community leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers are invited to

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
Council Business Panel meetings in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes. (Organisations that have a representative structure or are constituted groups that have representation on Scrutiny Committees would be prioritised– i.e. Southwark Youth Council, Tenant Management Council etc).			attend Council Business Panel meetings in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes. (Organisations that have a representative structure or are constituted groups that have representation on Scrutiny Committees would be prioritised– i.e. Southwark Youth Council, Tenant Management Council etc).
g) Involvement and participation. That relevant partnership groups / constituency groups are invited to Council Assembly. Groups may be invited to actively participate before, during and after by assisting with consultation, presenting information and doing follow up work; There would be a flexible and creative approached so, for example, the Youth Council may want to do a presentation or a Pensioners group show a film, a Scrutiny Committee may want to do detailed policy work on issues raised.	**f) Involvement and participation.** That relevant partnership groups / constituency groups are invited to Council Assembly. Groups may be invited to actively participate before, during and after by assisting with consultation, presenting information and doing follow up work; There would be a flexible and creative approached so, for example, the Youth Council may want to do a presentation or a Pensioners group show a film, a Scrutiny Committee may want to do detailed policy work on issues raised.		**g) Involvement and participation.** That relevant partnership groups / constituency groups are invited to Council Assembly. Groups may be invited to actively participate before, during and after by assisting with consultation, presenting information and doing follow up work; There would be a flexible and creative approached so, for example, the Youth Council may want to do a presentation or a Pensioners group show a film, a Scrutiny Committee may want to do detailed policy work on issues raised.
h) Measurable with Feedback and Follow-up That following on from the Assembly meeting on a theme the residents and the community would be signposted to the plans, strategies and policies that the debates had impacted on. They would also be made aware of the ongoing	**h) Measurable with Feedback and Follow-up** That following on from the Assembly meeting on a theme the residents and the community would be signposted to the plans, strategies and policies that the debates had impacted on. They would also be made aware of the ongoing		**h) Measurable with Feedback and Follow-up** That following on from the Assembly meeting on a theme the residents and the community would be signposted to the plans, strategies and policies that the debates had impacted on. They would also be made aware of the ongoing partnership groups that

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
partnership groups that take these polices forward, representatives that sit on these bodies (elected Members, constituency representative, community representative) and how they can continue to influence and monitor these plans .	partnership groups that take these polices forward, representatives that sit on these bodies (elected Members, constituency representative, community		take these polices forward, representatives that sit on these bodies (elected Members, constituency representative, community representative) and how they can continue to influence and monitor these plans . l) **The choice of themes** should be subject to proportionality allocated among political parties.
8.5 The Council Assembly should receive a single annual report covering the work of the Community Councils to highlight issues that are of borough wide concern.	None	None	None.
9 Format of the Council Assembly meeting			
9.1 That each Council Assembly starts with an informal session, this to be up to an hour before the formal start of the meeting. The informal session will be an opportunity for information on the theme to be presented in creative ways and for residents to mix with Members and the community in an informal setting.	None	9.1 That each Council Assembly starts with an informal session, this to be up to an hour before the formal start of the meeting. The informal session will be an opportunity to explore any theme, for information about the meeting to be presented in creative ways and for residents to mix with members in an informal setting.	None.
9.2 During these informal sessions officers provide sufficient	None	None.	None.

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Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
information papers about the meeting in plain English outlining the agenda of the meeting and the way the meeting is conducted. Also to make available sheets explaining how the Council and Council Assembly works and the role of the Councillors.			
9.3 That an officer from the constitutional team is present in the informal session to explain the process and the paper work. The information screens in the Assembly Meeting should provide better information such as the speakers name, the ward they represent, political group and position if Cabinet member.	None	None	None.
9.4 That the outcome of the meeting should be available in Plain English and accessible format and published on the Councils' website. And this should form the basis of any feedback to the residents at the following Council Assembly.	None	None	None.
9.5 See appendix for suggested outline of a Council assembly meeting format	None	None	None.
10.0 Council Assembly Business Panel			

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Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
10.1 The Commission recommends that a Council Assembly Business Panel be set up. This Council Assembly Business Panel is to be responsible for planning the Council Assembly's agenda as an advisory panel to the Mayor. The Panel will plan the annual agenda for up to a year of programmes for policy, budgetary framework development, themes, community leadership items and the content of informal sessions.	Delete	Delete *Comments - It is vital that Council Assembly agendas are a function of issues of current concern for both local residents, and all members of the council, as well as necessary council business. Council Assembly is the principal opportunity for individual, particularly non-executive, councillors to raise issues of concern to them. Any move to constrain this ability, or to give control of agendas to a small clique must be avoided.*	10.1 The Commission recommends that a Council Assembly Business Panel be set up. This Council Assembly Business Panel is to be responsible for planning the Council Assembly's agenda as an advisory panel to the Mayor. The Panel will plan the annual agenda for up to a year of programmes for policy, budgetary framework development, themes, community leadership items and the content of informal sessions. These themed meeting to have a minimum of two months notice.
10.2 The Council Assembly Business Panel to be chaired by the Mayor. The composition of the committee should be politically balanced, have all the whips as members plus 3 Councillors. It will have the ability to seek advice from community leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers as required who will act in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes.	Delete	Delete	The composition of the Panel should be one representative from each political group on the Council 10.2 The mayor has the ultimate responsibility for deciding on the Council Assembly business and will be advised by the Council Assembly Business panel. 10.3 The Council Assembly Business Panel to be chaired by the Mayor. The composition of the panel should be representative from each political group on the Council. It will have the ability to seek advice from community

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
			leaders/ active citizens/ experts / relevant officers as required who will act in an advisory role to plan debates on coming themes.
10.3 The Council Assembly Business Panel takes into account a balance between items of business promoting participative democracy (community engagement) and representative democracy (getting more out of elected Members).	<u>Delete</u>	<u>Delete</u>	None.
11 MEETING CONTENT			
11.1 At themed Council Assembly meetings Cabinet lead Members are to be called to present annual reports on their work and their vision, priorities and plans for the future. They will already have conducted engagement activities involving residents intended to inform policy development on their theme at Community Councils and in other fora. Residents will have the right to ask pre-submitted questions to this item on the agenda.	None	11.1 <u>Cabinet lead Members could be called by Council Assembly to present reports on their work and their vision, priorities and plans for the future. They will already have conducted engagement activities involving residents intended to inform policy development on their theme at Community Councils and in other fora. Residents could have the right to ask pre-submitted questions to this item on the agenda.</u>	None.
11.2 The Mayor to have more discretionary power in debate and allow interjections during	The Mayor to have more discretionary power in debate and allow interjections during	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
discussions if there is a relevant point to be added to the discussions. Debating rules will be simplified. This item to be kept under review by the Council Assembly Business Panel and to offer changes if it does not elicit good behaviour.	discussions if there is a relevant point to be added to the discussions. Debating rules will be simplified. This item to be kept under review by <u>the Constitutional Steering Panel</u> and to offer changes if it does not elicit good behaviour.		
12 Times and venues for Council Assembly			
12.1 The Commission recommends that the times of the Council Assembly be altered from previous times for the different themed meetings to cater for a meeting held for young people in partnership with the Youth Council, or for a daytime themed meeting on Adult Social Care which would particularly appeal to older people.	12.1 None	12.1 *(The timing and locations must take into account the fact that a majority of councillors have full time jobs, and many also have families, making both daytime and weekend meetings challenging)*	<u>12.1 The Commission recommends that the times of the Council Assembly be altered from previous times for the different themed meetings to cater for a meeting held for young people in partnership with the Youth Council, or for a slightly earlier or daytime themed meeting on Adult Social Care which would particularly appeal to older people.</u>
12.2 That the budgetary meeting in (January or February) may be held on a Saturday afternoon to enable a larger cross-section of residents to attend.	None	None	None
12.3 The commission recommends that the Council Assembly ceases meeting in the current Council Chamber and has its meetings in other venues around the borough.	<u>Delete</u> On balance I disagree with the proposal to move the Council Assembly away from the Town Hall. I recognise the drawbacks with the present chamber but I do	12.3 The commission recommends that the Council Assembly ceases meeting in the current Council Chamber and has its meetings in other venues around the borough. *(While we understand that the*	12.3 <u>The commission recommends that future Council Assembly Meetings be alternated between suitable venues throughout Southwark. The suitability of a venue to be screened</u>

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
	not believe they are sufficient to make us appear homeless and rootless as a body.	*chamber is not entirely suitable, particularly for disabled access, this should not be used as an excuse to dispose of the Town Hall)*	under an appropriate Equality and Community Impact Assessment. This EQIA and CIA will also include the current Town Hall Chamber being reviewed for its suitability. The criteria for a suitable venue to be based upon maximum participation and involvement by the community.
12.4 That the officers working on the current accommodation strategy explore this recommendation and the special requirements outlined in this report and present suitable alternative venues. The officers work out the costs of the various options available for the complete cycle of Council Assembly meetings including the cost of the current Council Chamber.	Delete	None	None.
13 COMMUNICATION and using new technology			
13.1 The Commission recommends engaging the media by providing media briefings before the meetings. These should be briefings by officers on the information role only and the Members on the opinion and values. Updates, briefings and alerts could go out to all media and	None	None	None.

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Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
local online community websites.			
13.2 That all documents are published online before the meeting or soon after (with a summary decision sheet) so media outlets have all the documents on hand.	None	None	None.
13.3 That the rules on the recording of audio are relaxed and all audio recording of the proceedings in Council Assembly be allowed.	None	None	None.
13.4 That podcasts be released on the Council's website from recordings of the sound system.	None	None	None.
13.5 That wireless access is enabled in any meeting venue that houses Council Assembly to enable tweeting and posting online.	None	None	None.
13.6 That better use of the Council's existing communication platforms and networks is undertaken. A better explanation of the Council Assembly should appear on Southwark media; Southwark Life and on the web including dates and announced in advance, summaries of the meeting, and the calls for	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
questions. Updates, briefings and summaries and alerts should go out to community networks (Southwark Life, TRAs, Forums, social media Sites, newspapers).			
13.7 Text / Facebook / Twitter /Assembly newsletter updates and invites should go to those residents signed up to Southwark platforms or there could be an option to join a specific list. Cost effective posting of important debates and decisions could have limited 'clips.'	None	None	None.
13.8 Targeted promotion for specific debates should be considered when at all practical – i.e. regeneration of a particular area would lead to invitations to local groups and people; a debate on Housing would target local TRAs etc.	None	None	None.
13.9 It is recommended that the costs for webcasting and TV broadcasting are looked into alongside the opportunities for using venues with built in facilities (e.g. the London Assembly debating chamber at the GLA).	None	None	None.
14 Community Education			

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
14.1 That there should be better information through the existing channels for better awareness and understanding of the Council Assembly, the workings of the Council in general, and the role of the Councillors in particular for the residents of the borough. Training, mentoring and citizenships class should all be promoted so residents have the skills, knowledge and support to get involved.	None	None	None.
15. Equalities issues			
15.1 The Democracy Commission has been set up with the aim of bringing the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. And these recommendations are primarily aimed at achieving that aim. Any implementation plan should include a full Equality and Community Impact Assessment.	None	None	None.
15.2 The Council Assembly Business Panel will need to think carefully about how it works with existing equalities groups to enable wider participation	Delete	15.2 Council Assembly will need to think carefully about how it works with existing equalities groups to enable wider participation	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

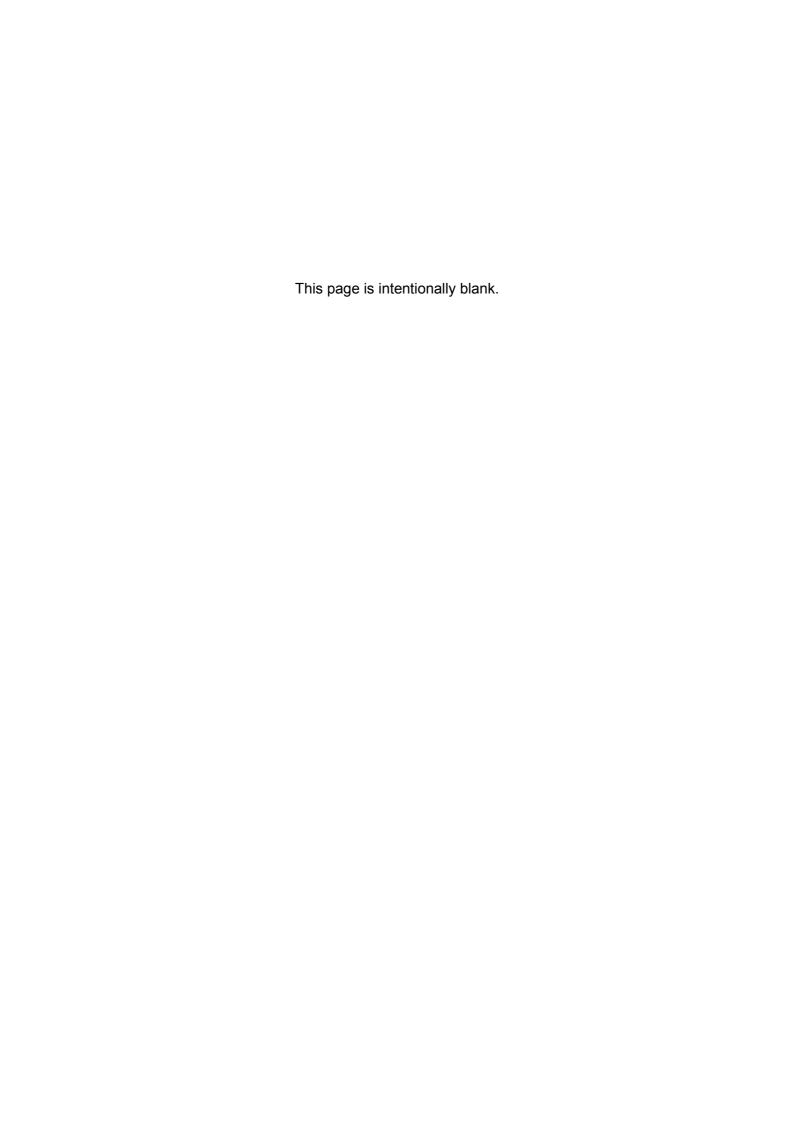| Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
15.3 Consideration should be given to training for officers and members in community engagement and how to ensure openness to community influence.	None	None	None.
16. Next Steps			
16.1 Following the acceptance of these recommendations, the Chair of the Democracy Commission to report back to the next meeting of the Council Assembly with a full implementation plan including any resource implications.	None	None	None.
Also the Council Assembly requests that a report is brought to the next Council Assembly to outline how the Council Constitution will be altered to enable these changes to be implemented.	None	None	None.
16.3 The Democracy commission as currently constituted oversees and assists the development of the implementation plan.	None	None	None.
16.4 That the Democracy Commission reviews the implementation of the agreed recommendations twelve months after these changes have been fully implemented and to work to	None	None	None.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
for further improvements			
Appendix 1 **MEETING FORMAT** This meeting format emphasises topical and themed debated. **Preparation** Prior to the themed debate taking place outreach would take place by Cabinet Members visiting Community Councils and other community forums on set themes in the weeks prior to the event. There may also be other engagement work to support this	None.	**Appendix 1** **MEETING FORMAT** **Preparation** Prior to the themed debate taking place outreach would take place by Cabinet Members visiting Community Councils and other community forums on set themes in the weeks prior to the event. There may also be other engagement work to support this – *This implies a top down approach. It is vital that Community Councils have control over their own agendas and programmes of work – it must not be for Cabinet Members to lead this type of engagement, but for Community Councils. If local communities and their councillors wish to invite Cabinet Members to their meetings, they will do so.*	**Appendix 1** **MEETING FORMAT** This meeting format emphasises topical and themed debated. **Preparation** Prior to the themed debate taking place outreach would take place by Cabinet Members visiting Community Councils and other community forums on set themes in the weeks prior to the event. There may also be other engagement work to support this
Meeting **Informal start** 30 minute informal 'meet the Assembly session' prior to the meeting start.		**Meeting** **Informal start** 30 minute informal 'meet the Assembly session' prior to the meeting start. – *If this takes place,*	**Meeting** **Informal start** 30 minute informal 'meet the Assembly session' prior to the meeting start.

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
This would informally present the information gathered from Community Councils etc and report on the Members vision, by for, example displays There may be a presentation by a community group – for example the Youth Council. This space would emphasis creative and informal ways of communicating. It would give an opportunity for the public to informally discuss issues with Members and the wider community. **Formal meeting** This is an outline guide to timings; it is recommended this is given to the CSP for more work. The Council Business Committee too would most likely need to adjust the timings by deciding the priority of each meeting. The meeting will last for no longer than three hours (subject to guillotine on debating formal reports for decision).		*it must be for the general benefit of members of the public – giving them an opportunity to talk informally with members of the council, rather than as an opportunity for members of the cabinet to present information to them.* It would give an opportunity for the public to informally discuss issues with Members and the wider community. **Formal meeting** This is an outline guide to timings; it is recommended this is given to the CSP for more work. The Council Business Committee too would most likely need to adjust the timings by deciding the priority of each meeting. The meeting will last for no longer than three hours (subject to guillotine on debating formal reports for decision). – *We do not believe that a guide is necessary, nor the proper role of the Commission – it is vital that agendas are left as free and unrestricted as possible to avoid discouraging engagement. It is*	This would informally present the information gathered from Community Councils etc and report on the Members vision, by for, example displays There may be a presentation by a community group – for example the Youth Council. This space would emphasis creative and informal ways of communicating. It would give an opportunity for the public to informally discuss issues with Members and the wider community. **Formal meeting** This is an outline guide to timings; it is recommended this is given to the CSP for more work. The Council Business <u>Panel</u> too would most likely need to adjust the timings by deciding the priority of each meeting. The meeting will last for no longer than three hours (subject to guillotine on debating formal reports for decision).

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		also important to recognise that everything mentioned below is already possible given the existing procedure rules listed in the constitution.	
1. Time for residents to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly – would need to find a balance between quality over quantity & accessibility 30 - 45 minutes for deputations and petitions from the public.		**1. Time for residents to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly** – would need to find a balance between quality over quantity & accessibility 30 - 45 minutes for deputations and petitions from the public. – *Residents already have this right, and it is rightly already at the top of the agenda.*	**1. Time for residents to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly** – would need to find a balance between quality over quantity & accessibility 30 - 45 minutes for deputations and petitions from the public.
2. Time for Members to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly 20 - 45 minutes for Members to bring <u>topical</u> motions, motions from Community Council and ask parliamentary style questions		**2. Time for Members to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly** 20 - 45 minutes for Members to bring <u>topical</u> motions, motions from Community Council and ask parliamentary style questions – *Members already have the right to ask questions and motions towards the beginning of the meeting, but we are worried about the suggestion that 20-45 minutes are devoted to questions and to motions, a marked reduction on the current situation. It is vital that any areas of the agenda devoted*	<u>**2. Themed debates centred on Cabinet member's portfolios ¾ hour for themed debate**</u> <u>10 minutes for Cabinet lead to present vision, priorities and plan for the year</u> <u>15 minutes for public pre submitted questions</u> <u>30 minutes for Member's motions and questions on the Cabinet theme using present principles to allow sufficient political balance and political parties to hold Cabinet to account.</u>

Southwark Democracy Commission Recommendations

Original Recommendation	Amendment 1 (Cllr Mitchell)	Amendment 2 (Cllr Al-Samerai)	Amendment 3 (Cllr Mohamed)
3. Themed debated centred on Cabinet member's portfolios - 1 hour for themed debate 10 minutes for Cabinet lead to present vision, priorities and plan for the year 15 minutes for public pre submitted questions 30 minutes for Member's motions and questions on the Cabinet theme using present principles to allow sufficient political balance and political parties to hold Cabinet to account.		*to allowing individual members of the council, and of the public, to raise concerns are maximised rather than reduced.* **3. Themed debated centred on Cabinet member's portfolios - 1 hour for themed debate** 10 minutes for Cabinet lead to present vision, priorities and plan for the year 15 minutes for public pre submitted questions 30 minutes for Member's motions and questions on the Cabinet theme using present principles to allow sufficient political balance and political parties to hold Cabinet to account. – *As already mentioned, we do not believe that themed meetings are necessary, and are in fact in danger of constraining the meetings to the detriment of individual members' ability to raise issues of current concern that do not fit with an arbitrarily chosen theme. Should Council Assembly wish to question a cabinet member, it should have the right to do so but it should not be forced to.*	<u>**3. Time for Members to bring topical and pertinent issues to Assembly**</u> <u>20 - 45 minutes for Members to bring topical motions, motions from Community Council and ask parliamentary style questions</u>

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4. Scrutiny reports (max 10 - 30 minutes) This slot would be reserved for occasional engaging and appropriate reports (freedom pass, food strategy)		**4. Scrutiny reports** (max 10 - 30 minutes) This slot would be reserved for occasional engaging and appropriate reports (freedom pass, food strategy) – *Scrutiny reports can already come to Council Assembly – specifying a time slot is unnecessary.*	**4. Scrutiny reports** (max 10 - 30 minutes) This slot would be reserved for occasional engaging and appropriate reports (freedom pass, food strategy)
5. Formal constitutional business (normally 10-30 minutes but the whole meeting in case of deciding the budget). This may be able to be reduced further if some reports are removed but would expand if Members wanted to Council assembly in future to consider additional policies for decisions – bearing in mind legal constraints may make this difficult.		**5. Formal constitutional business** (normally 10-30 minutes but the whole meeting in case of deciding the budget). This may be able to be reduced further if some reports are removed but would expand if Members wanted to Council assembly in future to consider additional policies for decisions – bearing in mind legal constraints may make this difficult. – *Formal business also already comes to Council Assembly. Specifying a time slot is unnecessary.*	**5. Formal constitutional business** (normally 10-30 minutes but the whole meeting in case of deciding the budget). This may be able to be reduced further if some reports are removed but would expand if Members wanted to Council assembly in future to consider additional policies for decisions – bearing in mind legal constraints may make this difficult.

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