



DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Thursday 21 April 2011 at 7.00 pm
at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Cleo Soanes

OFFICER SUPPORT: Stephen Douglass - Head of community engagement
Alexa Coates – Principal Constitutional officer
Ebony Riddell-Bamber – Community participation manager
Tim Murtagh – Constitutional officer

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Mohamed welcomed councillors and officers to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michael Mitchell and Councillor Paul Noblet.

3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the chair.

5. DEMOCRACY COMMISSION - STAGE 2 COMMUNITY COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING

Stephen Douglass took Members through the report and appendices. He explained that future Democracy Commission (DC) meetings would have further information on particular areas. The level of saving required was about 25% of the budget which was consistent with reductions being made elsewhere in the Council.

Members commented that Community Councils (CCs) should link up more with Council Assembly. Members wanted to know more about the attendance patterns of residents to assess what worked and how to attain better value for money. Officers agreed to provide a further break down of the attendance statistics to include cost of meeting per person and more information on members of the public who attended more than one community council.

Members discussed staffing levels, the cost of planning meetings, the community council fund, a central fund for carer and sign language payments and the hire of PA microphones. Members requested that further information be provided to future meetings to include:

- Description of staff roles
- Information on actual cost per meeting based on a selection of cc meetings
- Estimated costs comparison of hiring/buying a PA system

Members agreed that planning and the Localism Bill would be looked at in greater depth with planning officers at the June DC meeting and requested that the information provided at that meeting included options if planning decisions were not taken by community councils.

Stephen Douglass explained that issues relating to staffing matters were reserved to the chief executive and any officers appointed by her. This did not prevent the Commission from considering these issues but explained that any recommendations made about staffing levels would need to be made to the Strategic Director of Communities Law & Governance.

Members wanted CCs to increase attendance and public engagement and to look at the sponsorship of meetings or particular items as a way of raising interest and saving resources. They thought the times of day for meetings along with the views of community engagement staff and locally active people were important.

Members said the views of absent DC members on the report should be heard before reaching firm conclusions. They noted the DC aim of compiling draft recommendations in October 2011. Officers advised that the areas members had identified for further investigation could be incorporated into the existing workplan.

Residents in attendance were unhappy at the level of awareness of DC meetings. They said the process should be announced at CC meetings. Councillor Mohamed said chairs would be made more aware and there would be further opportunities for local people to take part in future meetings.

Action – Tim to circulate bullet points to absent DC members regarding areas for further information and further investigation, seeking their views. (These were sent to all DC

members on 27 April 2011).

The meeting ended at 8.30pm

CHAIR:

DATED: