

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 13 June 2011 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair)
Councillor Andy Simmons (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Dan Garfield
Councillor David Hubber
Councillor Tim McNally
Councillor Victoria Mills
Councillor David Noakes
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Mark Williams

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Fiona Colley, Cabinet Member, Regeneration & Corporate Strategy

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Doreen Forrester-Brown, Legal Services
Stephen Gaskell, Head of Corporate Planning and Performance
Graeme Gordon, Head of Corporate Strategy
James Sexton, Principal Strategy Officer
Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole and for absence from Mr Colin Elliott, education representative.

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

- 2.1 The Chair agreed to accept late reports in relation to item 4, Council Plan, and item

5, Scrutiny Work Programming.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. COUNCIL PLAN

4.1 Councillor Fiona Colley, cabinet member for regeneration & corporate strategy, introduced the draft council plan.

4.2 Members of the committee noted the intention for the plan to be published on Southwark's website and were concerned about people who did not have internet access. Officers confirmed that any requests from residents for printed copies of the plan would be met in the best way possible. Councillor Colley commented that consideration needed to be given to the use of other channels to publicise performance, such as Southwark News.

4.3 Members asked what consultation had been undertaken in respect of the plan and whether it was ongoing. Councillor Colley replied that the principal consultation took place during the election and was reflected in the Labour Group's manifesto pledges. In addition, community councils had been consulted on the cabinet's budget principles and further discussion had taken place at the themed council assembly.

4.4 The chair asked Councillor Colley how she envisaged the contribution to be made by overview & scrutiny committee. Councillor Colley hoped that the committee would have views on the schedules attached to the report, in terms of whether the correct measures had been captured. She also wondered whether the committee would wish to be involved in performance management. Members of the committee suggested that, before the plan was submitted for approval by council assembly, it would be useful if monitoring arrangements were more fully outlined.

4.5 Committee members were concerned that the council plan reflect and make reference to the Medium Term Resources Strategy (MTRS). Officers confirmed that the plan had to be fully aligned with the MTRS. Some targets were in both the plan and the MTRS and there were also additional targets in the MTRS.

4.6 Members queried details in the schedules setting out key priority actions and targets for each portfolio:

Schedule A, Measures for Finance and Resources

- Lack of targets to measure customer care. (Councillor Colley responded that she would take this back to Councillor Richard Livingstone, the relevant cabinet member.)

Schedule C, Measures for Health and Community Services

- There would be a need for measureable outcomes in respect of new responsibilities such as those relating to public health. (Officers agreed that it was important to reflect national indicators. The plan tried to set out areas where the council has a majority responsibility, alongside its partners. It would also be necessary to engage appropriately with the voluntary sector on setting targets and measuring outcomes.)
- *We aim to maximise people's choice and control through the provision of personal budgets* Questioned whether any work had been done on numbers. Also questioned whether the 100% target in 2013/14 was achievable. (Officers indicated that pretty accurate baseline numbers had been captured from the reviews of people's situations prompted by changes to the eligibility criteria. The 100% target was one of the Putting People First milestones. The target was broader than direct payments and therefore more achievable.)
- *We will ensure there are sensible safeguards against the risk of abuse or neglect* Important to measure performance in advance of new national outcomes framework. (Officers advised that the departmental action plan reflected the baseline in the 2010 CQC assessment. The high level measure required for the council plan would be developed in the future.)

Schedule D, Measures for Housing

- *Fair charges for leaseholders* Suggested more detail would be helpful in respect of capital billing and capital arrears.
- *Improve the housing repairs and other service standards* Important to know starting point and how targets are being verified. Reference to Housing scrutiny recommendations to cite specific scrutiny report.
- *Involve tenants and leaseholders in ongoing improvement of service delivery* Helpful to clarify the rating system.

Schedule E, Measures for Children's Services

- Details after the first year were sparse. (Officers explained that arrangements around the indicators were being changed. The department would be looking at this year's outturn results and comparing them with other authorities in order to set future targets.)
- *We will give young people real power over 20% of the youth service budget* Suggested that this objective was too vague. (Councillor Colley agreed to take this back for further consideration.)
- *We will champion improved educational attainment in all settings, holding all schools to account to deliver continuous improvement* Questioned whether this reflected the situation with secondary schools in the borough. (Councillor Colley responded that the council still had a statutory responsibility for secondary education. Officers added that the government, through Ofsted, would hold the council to account for the academic achievement of all pupils in all settings. Councillor Colley acknowledged that in some instances the council

had an influencing role rather than a controlling role.)

Schedule F, Measures for Community Safety

- *Increase the percentage of people who feel safe walking alone after dark and Reduce violent crime, in particular serious violence* Targets for 2012/13 and 2013/14 did not increase. (Councillor Colley explained that these reflected police targets. In the light of massive cuts, maintaining levels was a challenging enough target.)

Schedule G, Measures for Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Olympics

- Targets for libraries seemed highly aspirational. Some members were concerned that the indicators not be linked to other promotions, such as offering the lend of a DVD for free if five books were borrowed. (Councillor Colley confirmed that the department was confident that it could achieve targets despite the reduction in budgets. She commented on the positive impact of self-service check-outs and the provision of cafes and Wi-Fi and that the new library at Canada Water would offer such services.)

Schedule H, Measures for Transport, Environment and Recycling

- *Maintain our resident satisfaction with street cleanliness* Targets for 2012/13 and 2013/14 did not increase. (Councillor Colley commented that maintaining percentage levels was a challenging enough target.)
- *Increase the level of street trading and markets across the borough* The meaning of the percentages was unclear.

Schedule I, Measures for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy

- *Reduce the number of complaints about: parks, open spaces and cemeteries* Suggested that the aim should not be to discourage complaints but to ensure satisfaction. (Councillor Colley agreed to take this indicator back for further consideration)
- *Planning and development* Targets for "Other" appeared to decrease. (Councillor Colley indicated that she would look into this.)
- *Local area regeneration* There was scope to include reference to the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan and Peckham Conservation Area within the first column, relating to current performance. (Councillor Colley commented that the intention was to avoid overcrowding of the information. A reference could be made to the conservation area and implementation plans would be developed further.)

RESOLVED:

1. That officers and the relevant cabinet member go through the schedule of targets to ensure consistency, accuracy and meaningfulness.

2. That the cabinet be asked to provide greater clarity in respect of monitoring arrangements for delivering the key performance indicators outlined in the plan, including mechanisms for notification of updates and ensuring an easy and accessible format.

5. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMING

- 5.1 The committee agreed to the same structure of cabinet member interviews as in the previous year noting that, in addition to interviews at overview & scrutiny committee, the housing & community safety and regeneration & leisure sub-committees would be able to invite cabinet members to attend their meetings for specific issues. It also agreed to invite Councillor Fiona Colley, cabinet member for regeneration & corporate strategy, for interview towards the end of the municipal year. Members discussed the range of experience of interviews. It was felt that a high number of questions did not necessarily result in a useful discussion and that a mix of written questions and identified themes could produce a more successful outcome.
- 5.2 The committee considered how to begin a discussion of the budgetary savings to be made in the 2012/13 municipal year. Members asked for a breakdown of the current scrutiny budget and any comparison with savings made by other boroughs but agreed that the focus for discussion by the committee should be around the future role of scrutiny in Southwark and that decisions around resources should be left to the strategic director for communities, law & governance. Members also agreed that an informal away day would be a good starting point for reviewing the role of scrutiny and asked the head of overview & scrutiny to look into possible dates.
- 5.3 The chair drew members' attention to the likelihood of pre-budget scrutiny taking place around December time and invited suggestions for individual reviews that the committee might wish to undertake. Members suggested two possible areas for review, customer services and senior officers' pay, which were both supported by the committee. It was agreed that the work programme of the committee be agreed at its next meeting and that chairs of sub-committees report back on any proposals for the sub-committee work programmes.

RESOLVED:

1. That cabinet members be invited for interview by the following:

Overview & scrutiny

Leader of the council (Councillor Peter John)
Deputy leader & housing (Councillor Ian Wingfield)
Finance & resources (Councillor Richard Livingstone)
Regeneration & corporate strategy (Councillor Fiona Colley)

Education & children's services

Children's services (Councillor Catherine McDonald)

Environment, transport, communities & citizenship

Transport, environment & recycling (Councillor Barrie Hargrove)
Equalities & community engagement (Councillor Abdul Mohamed)

Health & adult social care

Health & adult social care (Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle)

Housing & community safety

Community safety (Councillor Richard Livingstone)

Regeneration & leisure

Culture, leisure, sport & the Olympics (Councillor Veronica Ward)

2. That the committee hold an away-day to begin consideration of the future role of scrutiny, bearing in mind budget savings to be made in 2012/13.
3. That the committee undertake reviews of customer services and senior officers' pay, the committee's work programme to be agreed at its next meeting.
4. That chairs of sub-committees report back to the next meeting on any proposals for the sub-committee work programmes.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm