

Democracy Commission

Thursday 22 September 2011

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Columba Blango
Councillor Mark Glover
Councillor Michael Mitchell
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor Cleo Soanes

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

Contact:

Tim Murtagh on 020 7525 7187 or email: tim.murtagh@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the panel are summoned to attend this meeting

Annie Shepperd

Chief Executive

Date: 16 September 2011



Democracy Commission

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7.00 pm

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	The chair to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.	
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	Discussion	
11.	SHAPING THE RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Discussion	
12.	PUBLIC COMMENTS	
	Opportunity for residents in attendance to comment on any matters raised during the meeting.	
13.	EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS	
	That the public be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 13 only, on the grounds that the item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.	
14.	PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM OPTIONS	
	To consider the information set out in the closed report	

Date: 16 September 2011



DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Wednesday 3 August 2011 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Mark Glover
Councillor Michael Mitchell
Councillor Cleo Soanes

OTHER MEMBERS

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove

OFFICER

SUPPORT: Michael Cleere, Community Cohesion Co-ordinator
Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement
Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager
Barbara Selby, Head of Transport Planning
Darryl Telles, Neighbourhoods Manager
Des Waters, Head of Public Realm
Tim Murtagh, Constitutional Officer

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Abdul Mohamed welcomed councillors, officers and residents to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Columba Blango, Helen Morrissey and Paul Noblet.

3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the open minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the chair subject to the following additions:

Under Item 8,

“Members looked at the sub-committee models and discussed the North-South and East-West possibilities. There was a discussion on other models.”

Under Item 9, Council Assembly 6 July – add at end:

“Councillor Cleo Soanes had asked for the filming of council assemblies to be considered at future meetings.”

“In response to Councillor Soanes request, Stephen Douglass said that the filming of council assembly would be considered during the 22 September meeting of the Democracy Commission.”

2. That the closed notes of the meeting held on 8 July 2011 circulated to members only.”

5. ROLE AND PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Stephen Douglass introduced the report and said that Des Waters and Barbara Selby would explore this as part of item 6.

6. ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT ISSUES AT COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Des Waters introduced the environmental and cleaner, greener, safer roles of community councils making reference to page 6, item 5 of the main agenda.

Des Waters explained that action teams used to do a range of street auditing and report back results to community councils. The action teams had been stood down and there were no regular attending officers at meetings from the Environment and leisure department. Occasional briefings would take place on things such as waste management.

On the cleaner, greener, safer (CGS) programme, Des said that there was an error in the report and in 2009/10 there was an allocation. Funding of £1.8 million had been confirmed for 2012/13 and future years. Delivery of projects had improved year on year and the next programme would be rolled out in the final quarter of 2011. Officers were considering how to reformulate it to cover other objectives around local decision making.

Des Waters informed the commission that officers were currently briefing cabinet members on the way forward. The 2012/12 programme would be rolled out in the final quarter of 2011 to allow project delivery to be undertaken in quarters 2-4 of 2012/13. It was noted that the Democracy Commission’s timescale for reporting in December 2011 would potentially delay implementation of the 2012/13 programme.

Des Waters advised that officers were considering options for more devolved forms of local decision making as part of the localism agenda. The options included:

1. Providing grants – involving small sums of money with decision by either cabinet member, community council or ward member.
2. Capacity building – working with communities and local groups
3. Engagement – e.g. public vote.

It was reported that some of these options would have resource implications.

Larger projects would be contracted out whilst some smaller schemes would be delivered through grants to local community groups. One challenge was to make the process more inclusive as CGS tended to get many of the same bidders each year.

Members considered the options of devolved decision making to individual Members at ward level. Some felt that the current system worked well at the moment and could not see a case to change the system unless sufficient reductions in costs could be made. Officers clarified that any such savings would not impact on the savings the Democracy Commission was seeking.

The CGS team used to have twelve project management officers delivering projects and it now had six. Des explained that the staff cost of about £300,000 would have to be met out of the £1.8 million. The challenge was to deliver more projects locally and reduce costs, however officers bring accountability and control of the programme. In summary Des Waters said a number of models were being looked at and the cabinet member would be sent a paper on this. The 2012/13 CGS model would be the same as in previous years but changes could be made for 2013/14.

Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling, welcomed any ideas members of the commission may wish to contribute on how community councils could administer CGS in the future. The officer presentation report contained many ideas but he wanted to hear more.

Barbara Selby introduced the transport management roles of community councils making reference to page 6, item 5 of the main agenda. The role of the transport team at community councils included: consulting on the Transport Plan (this was last year only), consulting on the TfL funding plans (known as the Local Implementation Plan), making themselves available for discussions on transport issues.

Increasingly officers are attending transport planning community council sub-groups if there are transport issues. In future years transport officers only expected to attend one meeting of each community council a year when TfL funding plans were discussed. Otherwise attendance would be as requested and varies between community councils.

Barbara Selby explained that her aim was to make sure that no issue of importance was left out of the Transport Plan (Local Implementation Plan). The decision ultimately would be taken by Cabinet but any scheme that receives strong local support at community council was more likely to make it into the first programme. Officers were always available to attend community councils and in the past had given support to transport sub-groups.

In response to a question from the chair, Barbara said that her team receive £20,000 from the community council budget. This funds half an officer post.

Councillor Glover said that transport items at his community council had been among the most engaging and had given rise to visible changes following the consultation.

Officers requested that the commission review some of the transport decision making functions. An example given was local disabled parking bays which although approval of bays is reserved to community councils the allocation of places is actually based on a borough wide criteria.

Another area of decision making which would merit review was community councils involvement in controlled parking zone decisions in light of the recent changes to the constitution to make strategic transport and CPZ issues decision making a matter for the relevant cabinet member. Currently the same CPZ proposal could be considered at different stages by a community council on no less than three occasions: (1) to agree in principle the consultation plan on a CPZ, (2) report back on consultation and (3) finally a report on final design of the scheme. Officers suggested that this could be reduced by officers producing a consultation plan and reverting back to members at the final design stage. In response to a question officers advised that consultation plans are rarely changed.

A similar approach on consultation policy could also be applied to traffic management orders.

The commission welcomed any proposals to rationalise decision making in the way proposed by officers.

Members noted that less officer time should reduce the cost either to community councils or to the council.

Des Waters reported that regarding the Highways and Lighting Capital scheme, that the cabinet had allocated £175,000 to each area in the last two years. However, in view of the need to allocate funding strategically he would not be recommending to the cabinet member such an allocation this year. That view was due to the state of the road network and the reduced resources available.

Councillor Barrie Hargrove said that the Council was trying to make the most of limited resources. To get up to standard £50 million was needed plus £6 million per year, at the moment they had £4 million to work with.

Councillor Mitchell said he would welcome the ability of community councils to allocate some monies locally as local councillors understood their areas; based on this approach he could see an argument to allocate more funds. In response officers advised that it was proposed to recommend that the limited funds available be allocated to planned preventative programmes.

Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Barbara Selby and Des Waters left the meeting at this point.

7. ENGAGEMENT FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Darryl Telles explained that community councils were encouraged to be more than a meeting. The workshops, themed meetings and films had developed interest and explored a broad range of topics. Darryl highlighted the case studies and attendance data.

Members felt that attendance at meetings varied according to the items for discussion along with choice of venue. Concerns were raised over why there were such variations in attendance.

Action: The reasons why some residents stop attending would be considered at the 22 September 2011 meeting of the Democracy Commission.

8. CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS AND STAFF ON COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Michael Cleere summarised the findings of the consultation. Consultation with the public would continue and be borough wide throughout August. The questionnaire was available on the website and in local libraries.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY COUNCIL BUDGETS

Stephen Douglass introduced the three short papers that were a response to questions raised at the previous meeting of the Democracy Commission.

9.1 CLARIFICATION ON BUDGET

The report looked at pension adjustments, team budget underspends and service level agreements.

Action: Councillor Michael Mitchell to clarify with the Finance Director the potential impact of the pension adjustments on the savings.

9.2 EXAMPLES OF COSTS PER ATTENDEE

Ian Millichap explained that there were fixed and variable costs per meeting. Among those were van hire, public address, venues, publicity and sign language. The total costs range was approximately £1,300 to £2,000 per meeting.

9.3 ESTIMATED SAVINGS FROM REDUCED MEETINGS

Members explored the impact of fewer meetings on matters including the cleaner, greener, safer programme and reviewing some decisions such as disabled parking bays from a timetabling perspective.

It was reported that reducing community council areas from 8 to 5 would save around £100,000. Reducing the amount of main meetings per year from 6 to 4 would save around

£69,000.

10. PLAN FOR DEMOCRACY COMMISSION ITEM AT SEPTEMBER ROUND OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Stephen Douglass explained the plan for engaging residents in the community council review. There would be slots at each community council meeting in September at which Democracy Commission members would introduce the session. Both options, plenary and workshop, sought feedback from residents on what worked at community councils and what did not, as well as seeking ideas for suggested savings.

Members asked for the categories list to be looked at again. In particular, the wording of the reducing activities at meetings category could be more general.

Action: Ebony to circulate an amended category list for consideration.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

A resident asked if there was something available that informed what the Democracy Commission covered. Stephen Douglass explained there were terms of reference and a work programme. Those could be emailed and were available on the website.

Another resident valued the work undertaken by the CGS team and said that a range of approaches was needed to deliver projects. She supported the idea of increased involvement of residents. It was useful when officers attended so they could fully understand what local people wanted e.g. their traffic schemes. She added that people referred to as "usual suspects", who attended meetings should be viewed as gateways to the community.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Agenda Item 5

Item No. 5.	Classification: Open	Date: 22 September 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission – Phase 2
Report title:		Area Housing Forums and Community Councils	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Simon Godfrey, Resident Involvement Senior Manager	

Brief overview

1. This paper is a short discussion document looking at the potential connections between area housing forums and community councils

Background on area housing forums

2. Area housing forums exist to consult residents locally on housing matters. There are currently twelve of them, reduced from the original nineteen neighbourhood housing forums. The reduction was made when Southwark's housing was restructured from nineteen neighbourhoods to eight areas. Six forums argued strongly for their continuance, resulting in the twelve current forums.
3. The area housing forums are the middle tier of a pyramid that forms the formal consultation structure for housing. At the base are tenants' & residents' associations and tenant management organisations, each of which are able to send delegates to forum. The majority, but not all, take up this option.
4. The forum constitutions also allow for delegates from other groups in the community (young people, people with disabilities, people with caring responsibilities for children and/or relatives, pensioners, lesbians/gay men, black and ethnic minorities) but in practice these places are seldom filled.
5. At the top of the pyramid are tenant council and home owners council, both of which mainly comprise delegates and deputies from area housing forums.
6. The housing service restructured to two areas on 1 September 2011. However, there are no plans at this time to restructure the area housing forums to match this arrangement.
7. Historically, area housing forums were introduced to serve a purpose in a partially devolved housing service, when there were local repairs teams and devolved capital budgets. Their remit was based on the housing service but able to reach beyond that. This can be seen from the functions and powers set out in the existing constitution for Bermondsey area housing forum (appendix one). Other forums have mirrors of that constitution.

Links with Community Councils

8. The way practice has developed has seen area housing forums specialising in council housing, whilst other matters are discussed at Community Councils.

9. There is some cross over between the two structures, with many forum delegates also attending their local community council.
10. The dedication of forums to housing matters allows those most affected - council tenants and leaseholders - to discuss housing matters in forums and helps provide the space for other issues to be raised at community councils without duplication.
11. This separation of functions can therefore be seen as useful, and is well understood by those involved.
12. Further thought may well be needed on whether the forums need to be changed in some way following many years of evolution from their origins, What started as nineteen forums for nineteen devolved areas now sees us with twelve forums and two areas where almost all services are defined on a borough-wide basis.
13. Community councils have some ability to make local decisions and also allocate grant funding. Area housing forums are consultative only, and do not have any budget. Tenants' & residents' associations, however, are frequently the recipients of funding allocated by community councils.

London Borough of Southwark

Bermondsey west Area Forum Constitution

UPDATED: 18th April 2005.

1. General Purpose

1.1 The Bermondsey West Area Forum is one of Southwark Council's principal advisory bodies on housing and related issues in the Bermondsey Area. It was established to enable local representatives:

- **to express their views** to the Council, other authorities and agencies on the provision and development of services within the Area,
- **to work with the Area Office** to determine the quality, level and delivery of services provided within the Area,
- **to influence** the way in which Area budgets are drawn up and resources are allocated within the Area.

It is part of a network of Area Forums which, along with the Tenant and Leaseholder Councils, have been established by Southwark Council to assist Southwark Council to consult its tenants and leaseholders about matters of housing management.

2. FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

2.1 The Forum's functions are:

- (i) **To act as a sounding board** for local opinion in relation to matters referred to it by Southwark Council, Tenant Council, Leaseholder Council or by its own members;
- (ii) **To receive monitoring information** on the performance of the Area Office;
- (iii) **To monitor and make recommendations** about the quality, level and priorities of service provisions in the Area and on strategic and policy matters borough wide and nation-wide if these affect the Area.
- (iv) **To participate in drawing up the Area budget**, and in decision on how the budget should be spent;
- (v) **To prepare and priorities bids** for the Council's capital spending programme;
- (vi) **To advise** on the disbursement of any special grants for community provision within the Area;
- (vii) **To comment on any planning and licensing applications** relating to the Area;
- (viii) **To promote activities** which integrate the local community and lead to a better understanding of Council Services and services provided by other statutory agencies;
- (ix) **To regulate**, in conjunction with the Area Office, the use of community accommodation and equipment under the control of the Area Office;
- (x) **To elect** Council Tenants to represent the Area on Tenant Council and council leaseholders to represent the Area on Leaseholder Council.

- 2.2 The forum may consider any matter of direct relevance to its functions, but must not consider or discuss matters:
- (i) relating to individual members of staff or their employment conditions,
 - (ii) arising between the council and any individual tenant, or
 - (iii) of a purely party-political nature.
- 2.3 The forum is an advisory body and does not have the power to make decisions on behalf of Southwark Council.
- 2.4 The forum must: -
- (i) conduct its business in a way that does not unlawfully discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any individual or section of the community, and work within the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - (ii) deal with issues in accordance with Southwark Council's policies and financial constraints.
- 2.5 The forum may: -
- (i) appoint sub-groups and special working groups that are accountable to the forum and shall regularly report back and where necessary, seek approval of the Forum. All sub-groups must be re-appointed at the Annual General Meeting if their work continues into another municipal year.
 - (ii) require, where reasonably necessary, any Council Manager or Contractor who provides the Area with a service to attend to provide information or progress reports and answer questions.

3. MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING

- 3.1 The Forum is comprise of: -
- (i) Voting Members;
 - (a) Delegate/s from each Tenant Management Organisation and each recognised Tenants & Residents Association.
 - (b) Delegate/s from each local community group recognised by the council as having a "housing interest".
 - (c) Delegate/s from each of the following groups within the borough, selected in accordance with Appendix 1:-
 - Young Person (between 16 - 18 years of age),
 - People with disabilities (including physical and learning disabilities, and mental illness),
 - People with caring responsibilities for children and/or relatives,
 - Pensioners,
 - Lesbians/Gay men,
 - Black and ethnic minorities.
 - (ii) Members with observer status and speaking rights
 - (a) Deputies for each voting delegate. The Deputy may vote if their delegate is absent.
 - (b) Ward Councillors for the Area, who may not vote.
 - (c) Deputies from a borough-wide group housing interest, who may attend meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest, but may vote only if the deputy is resident in the Area.

- (d) Co-opted members, whose speaking and voting rights are, decided at the time the Forum appoints them.
- 3.2 A list of organisations providing delegates, details of numbers of delegates, and minimum membership criteria are contained in Appendix 1. The appropriate nominating body must fill vacancies in membership arising during the year, and the forum informed of the nomination at its next meeting.
- 3.3 A maximum of one-fifth of the forum membership may be co-opted. Members may be co-opted to represent a local or under-represented group, or because they have particular skills or expertise beneficial to the forum. Co-optees' appointments last until the next Annual General Meeting, or for such shorter time as is decided by the forum.
- 3.4 A person may not serve as a voting member of the forum if: -
- (i) They do not live in the Area.
A decanted person with a right to return whom represents a Forum Voting Member in 3.1. (i) will be deemed to still live in the Area.
 - (ii) They are an employee of the council, or a contractor to the council, and are employed to provide a housing related service in the borough;
 - (iii) They represent a community group and are employed by that group.
- 3.5 Only representatives who are council tenants may vote on questions that may directly affect the level of rent charged to tenants. (expenditure heading incorporated with in the housing revenue account that may affect the rent charged).
- 3.6 The composition of the Forum should aim to reflect the local community.

4. MEETINGS

- 4.1 *[Frequency]* The Forum must meet at least once in every two monthly interval.
- 4.2 *[Openness]* Forum meetings are open to the public.
- 4.3 *[Chair]* The Forum Chair and Vice Chair are elected at the Annual General Meeting. If they are both absent at a meeting then an acting chair is elected for that meeting only by a simple majority of those present. A Southwark Borough Councillor or Council Employee may not act as chair.
- 4.4 *[Meeting Procedure and Standing Orders]* Forum meetings are conducted in accordance with the Code of Conduct (Appendix 3), Forum Standing Orders (Appendix 4) and reasonable rules of debate.
- 4.5 *[Quorum]* the Quorum is set out in Appendix 1. The Forum is validly constituted if the required quorum is present, even if any delegate is absent or there is a vacancy in the forum's membership.

5. **AGENDA**

- 5.1 Agenda items must be sent to The Chair of the Forum and the Vice Chair and the Area Manager at least three weeks before the scheduled meeting.
- 5.2 The Chair, the Vice Chair, the Resident Involvement Manager and the Area Manager will meet and draw up the agenda two weeks before the meeting. Late items may be discussed at the discretion of the Chair and Vice Chair.
- 5.3 Items will be excluded from the agenda if:
- (i) The Forum has no power to consider them (under clause 2), or
 - (ii) They have been considered by the Forum within the previous six months and were not recommended to be forwarded to the appropriate Committee, or Council.
- 5.4 The Council will send an agenda and supporting papers at least one week before the meeting.
- 5.5 Late items may be discussed at the discretion of the Chair and Vice Chair. Reports in respect of emergency items will, if necessary, be distributed to delegates before the meeting. In exceptional circumstances, emergency items may be circulated round the table at the meeting.

6. **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

- 6.1 The first meeting of the Municipal Year is the Annual General Meeting. At least 4 weeks notice of the Annual General Meeting must be given to all groups sending delegates to the Forum to enable them to nominate delegates.
- 6.2 At the Annual General Meeting the Forum
- (i) Receives written reports on the work of the Area from the Area Manager, and the outgoing Chair of the Forum.
 - (ii) Receives notification of delegates and deputies from:
 - Tenants and Residents Associations
 - Tenant Management Organisations
 - Housing Interest Groups
 - Under-represented sections.
 - (iii) Elects the Chair, Vice Chair and any representatives to committees, working parties and outside bodies,
 - (iv) Elects two delegates and two deputies, who must be Southwark Council tenants, to represent the Forum at Tenant Council.
 - (v) Elects a delegate and a deputy, who must be Southwark Council leaseholder, to represent the Forum at Leaseholder Council.
 - (vi) May review its Constitution, Code of Conduct, and appendices and recommend amendments to the Executive. Amendments must be referred to Tenant Council, and do not take effect until approved by the appropriate body.
 - (vii) May amend its standing orders. Amendments to standing orders do not require ratification by Southwark Council.

7. **ADMINISTRATION**

- 7.1 The Council provides administrative support for Area Forums and must ensure that:
- (i) Minutes are taken;
 - (ii) Appropriate officers are informed of decisions taken;
 - (iii) Recommendations and reports are referred to the appropriate committee;
 - (iv) Meetings are accessible to local representatives in order to encourage participation and in particular: -
 - (a) The Meeting room has disabled access;
 - (b) Meetings are participative in style and sympathetically times;
 - (c) Agenda items are relevant to local needs, interesting and have broad appeal;
 - (v) If needed, and if one week's notice is given:
 - (a) agendas and documentation circulated at the meeting are available in formats that can be understood by those with sensory difficulties;
 - (b) facilities are available for:
 - Interpreting and signing;
 - Transport to and from the meeting;
 - Childcare or payment of a childcare/carers allowance.
- 7.2 The Area Manager will respect the Forum's recommendations, but need not follow the recommendations if they are contrary to Council policy or against the law. The Area Manager must inform the Forum in writing of his or her reasons for not following the Forum's recommendation.
- 7.3 If a dispute arises between the Area Manager and the Forum then the Forum can refer the dispute to the appropriate Head of Service or Director of Housing and Chair of Tenant Council for resolution.
- 7.4 The Resident Involvement Manager will inform the organisation if a representative has not attended for three consecutive meetings.
- 7.5 Agendas and documentation circulated at the meeting are available in formats that can be accessed by those with sensory difficulties.

London Borough of Southwark

BERMONDSEY WEST AREA FORUM CONSTITUTION

UPDATED: 18th April 2005

APPENDIX 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEETINGS

1. Area Forums are there to give all sections of the community the chance to have said on how services are provided by the Council and to raise other matters of local concern. Their success depends upon their ability to reflect the diversity of opinions that the public hold.
2. The constitution of Area Forums include provision for the involvement of under represented sections of the community and the guidelines on the establishment of Area Forums specify ways that meetings should be organised to ensure all sections of the community can attend. It is important also that all of those participating are given the opportunity to express their view and are treated with equal courtesy.
3. To ensure that Forum meetings are conducted in a spirit of equality and informality, in which minority opinions can be heard, the following code of conduct should apply to Forum meetings.
 - 3.1 All participants (this means everyone present at the meeting – delegates, officers, Councillors and observers) in the Forums have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a way that does not cause offence to others or limits in any way their ability to participate in meetings.
 - 3.1.1. This includes racist, sexist or other derogatory remarks or actions, behaviour that intimidates people who are speaking or wish to speak and preventing people from expressing their views through interrupting or talking while they are speaking.
 - 3.2 Forum members must be particularly sensitive to the needs of those members who may not be used to speaking in public or whose first language is not English.
4. Forum members or members of the public who feel that this code of conduct has been breached should raise it with the Chair either at the time or immediately after the meeting.
 - 4.1 The Chair, on the advice of the Area Manager will judge whether the person has breached the code of conduct. If there has been a breach the Chair will point out to the person that such behaviour is not acceptable.
 - 4.1.1 Where a Forum member or member of the public feel the Chair of the meeting has breached the Code of Conduct there they should request the Vice Chair or in their absence another Forum member to propose a motion of No Confidence in the Chair. During the debate on the motion the Chair should hand over to the Vice Chair.

- 4.2 If the unacceptable behaviour persists a motion will be put to the meeting to suspend the person or persons from the meeting. Future participation by that person will be dependant upon a commitment being given in writing to the Chair that such behaviour will not recur.
- 4.3 Continued breaches of the code of conduct by Forum Members will result in membership being withdrawn by a simple majority of those presents and voting at the Forum.

London Borough of Southwark

BERMONDSEY WEST AREA FORUM CONSTITUTION

UPDATED: 18th April 2005

APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

1. **Criteria for recognition of groups sending delegates to Area Forum on behalf of under-represented sections of the Borough**
 - 1.1 Groups sending delegates to the Area Forum must
 - (i) be based in the Area
 - (ii) support the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
 - (iii) be a not for profit group
 - (iv) not be party-political
 - (v) be constituted in a fashion consistent with council policies
 - (vi) be able to demonstrate that their services or meetings are regularly publicised
 - (vii) act with the terms of their constitution
 - (viii) not be represented by a person employed by the group or the Council.
 - (ix) Register with the Council (Resident Involvement Manager) and provide details of their aims, the area covered by the organisation, their criteria for membership, the names and addresses of their officers, a commitment to the Council's Equal Opportunities policy and a copy of the organisation's constitution.
 - (x) Be approved by Southwark Council as a nominating body. Southwark Council may revoke approval after consultation with the Area Forum.

2. Groups currently representing under-represented sections of the community on Bermondsey West Area Forum.
 - Young persons (between 16-18 years of age)
 - People with disabilities (including physical and learning disabilities, and mental illness).
 - People with caring responsibilities for children and/or relatives
 - Pensioners
 - Lesbian/Gay men
 - Black and ethnic minorities

3. Schedule of Recognised Tenants Management Organisations and Tenants & Residents Associations

- Arnold Estate
- Dickens Estate
- St Saviour, Purbrook and Aylwin Magdalen Estate. (SPAM)
- Neckinger Estate
- Setchell Estate
- Swanmead, Harold, Creasy Estate(SHACCA)
- Vauban estate.
- Tooley Street. (TMO)
- Two Towers TMO (TMO)
- Bermondsey Street
- Kipling Estate
- Crosby, Lockyer & hamilton
- Tanner House Co-operative. (TMO)
- 3.1 The number of representatives from each of the properly constituted and recognised tenants/residents associations and management co-operatives as identified above will be two (Number).
- 3.2 The number of deputies from each of the properly constituted and recognised tenants/residents associations and management co-operatives as identified above will be two (Numbers).
4. Schedule of local community groups with a housing interest as recognised in accordance with Clause 3.1. (b) of the Area Forum Constitution.
- Bermondsey Pensioner Action Group.
- Southwark Group of Tenants Association (SGTO) .
- 4.1 The number of representatives from each local community group with a housing interest shall be one (Number).
- 5. Quorum**
- 5.1 The quorum for Area Forums shall be not less than a third (Portion) of its elected membership or 4 (Number) of members whichever is the greater. If there is no quorum after twenty minutes from the scheduled start time, the meeting will be cancelled. Once the meeting has commenced, it will close if there is no longer a quorum.
- 6. Adoption of Constitution Code of Conduct**

6.1 Bermondsey West Area Forum adopted its Constitution and Code of Conduct at the Area Forum meeting held on: 29 November 05.

Signed: Chair

Vice Chair

Area Manager

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 22 September 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission – Phase 2
Report title:		Consultation with residents on review of community councils	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Democracy Commission note the contents of this report which presents some qualitative and quantitative data to highlight the views of residents on community councils.
2. That the Democracy Commission identify ways to incorporate useful suggestions and feedback into its recommendations for savings and improvements to community councils.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. As outlined in the Commission’s workplan, a series of focus groups have been conducted over the past couple of months to speak to residents about community councils, share details of this review, and find out what they think in relation to improvements to the format and potential ways to make savings.
4. We also widely distributed questionnaires (Appendix 1) to residents at community council meetings, through community council email networks, other resident networks and on the council website. The information obtained through this questionnaire is also presented in this report.
5. Focus groups were held with regular attendees of community councils across the eight areas, and separate ones with one-off or non-attendees, to hear their perspectives on the barriers to participating in meetings.
6. At the July meeting of the Commission, members were presented a report on focus groups and meetings conducted to obtain the views of members and officers on review. This is included at Appendix 2.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Feedback from resident focus groups

7. Focus group participants who were regular community council attendees were asked to share their views in relation to the three core functions of community councils (below) as well as on ways to make savings:
 - decision-making
 - engagement and participation
 - consultation

8. Focus group participants who had only attended one or two meetings, or none at all, were asked to share their impressions of their meetings they had attended, and identify some of the barriers to more regular attendance.
9. The feedback from focus groups contained in this report relates to comments or points which were raised or supported by several participants. We have also included points which would be of use to the Commission in terms of its task to identify savings.

Community council agendas

10. Several residents we consulted felt there should be greater flexibility and resident involvement in setting agendas. It was suggested that there should be:
 - More input from residents on setting themes
 - Residents should be able to suggest agenda items for next meeting
 - Agendas to be sent out further in advance
 - Flexibility to shift agenda at meetings in response to interest from attendees
 - Agendas should be less busy
 - Should have more local interest topics
 - Big items should not be given priority as they take over meeting
 - Question time should be early on the agenda
 - Give less platform for items which interest just a few

Community council minutes

11. Residents made some useful suggestions around improving how minutes are handled to make it clearer to residents how issues are being followed up:
 - Minutes should contain a 'rolling action list', covering:
 - a) Who the issue went to
 - b) What the response was
 - c) What has taken place
 - All CC actions for members and officers should be available to the public (e.g. online)
 - Often not enough minutes available at meetings

Marketing and publicity around meetings

12. Many participants felt that the diversity within the community was not adequately reflected at community council meetings:
 - Wider outreach in the community
 - More notice of meetings
 - Need to reach out more to young people, young parents, beyond the usual suspects
 - Should let people know about Council Assembly meetings
 - Should use more social media

Chairing and presentations

13. It was felt that there was room for improvement in this area in many cases and that this would help reduce the length of meetings:

- More time for questions
- Stricter chairing to avoid overly lengthy presentations
- Short, succinct presentations – PowerPoint presentations should be limited per meeting
- Less domination by the same residents

Meeting timing and format

14. There were a number of comments in relation to when meetings are held, bringing councillors and residents closer together and restricting the length of meetings:

- Weekend or daytime meetings from time to time to allow more people to attend
- Roundtable format
- Table seating rather than formal audience
- More interactive and less formal
- More workshops and group discussions
- A maximum duration of two hours per meetings should be strictly adhered to
- Community council meetings shouldn't clash with other meetings
- Would be good if councillors could come early to welcome and talk to residents

Resident input and feedback

15. The following points were made in relation to improving how residents' viewpoints are featured and followed up through meetings:

- More time for residents to pose questions, debate issues
- More feedback about how residents' suggestions have been taken into account e.g. around consultations – strengthening accountability
- Information on council spending in areas
- Should collect vox pops around meetings so people less able to attend can respond to specific questions
- Meetings can be very intimidating for new people
- Paperwork format can be difficult to penetrate, easy for officers/councillors but not residents
- Online blog/forum for those who can't attend to have their say, e.g. on major consultations
- More walkabouts in the local area by councillors with residents, TRAs etc.

How community councils can make savings

16. Participants were made aware of the savings element of this review, and some of the areas being looked at in relation to reducing costs. There were some specific comments in relation to this:

- Tea and biscuits should be enough – don't need food
- PA systems are very important, should be rationalised so less expensive.

- Planning should be centralised
- Community councils should support local projects, it's not all about money
- Planning meetings should not be incorporated; they are physically exhausting.
- Planning could be cut at community council level but have a slot or paper distributed at each meeting to inform people what will be going to central planning from the local area, and how to get involved
- Invest in the community by putting PA systems in community centres so they can be used for community council meetings, as well as other community meetings. Community groups can look after the ongoing maintenance and provide support to the community council meetings

Savings ranking exercise

17. Participants at each focus group were asked to agree how they would rank the following methods of making savings to community council budgets. Here are the rankings from the focus groups (favoured method at the top):

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
1	Fewer meetings	Fewer meetings	Fewer meetings (Planning should become central)	Fewer meetings (but have subgroups in between)
2	Reducing venue and equipment costs.	Reducing activities at meetings	Reducing publicity	Changes to decision-making powers (more decision-making for residents)
3	Reducing publicity.	Changes to decision-making powers	Reducing venue and equipment costs	Reducing activities at meetings.
4	Reducing activities at meetings	Reducing publicity	Reducing activities at meetings.	Reducing venue and equipment costs
5	Changes to decision-making powers (fewer but longer planning meetings)	Reducing venue and equipment costs	Changes to decision-making powers	Reducing publicity (be smarter and use more technology)
6	Larger CC areas	Larger CC areas	Larger CC areas	Larger CC areas

18. Having fewer meetings a year emerged clearly as the preferred option for making savings, and increasing the size of community council areas was the least preferred option across the board.

Feedback from questionnaires

19. A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was distributed at community council meetings in June and announcements were made at meetings to encourage residents to fill them out. An online survey was also available on the website, and neighbourhoods team officers distributed questionnaires electronically to local contacts e.g. TRAs. People were allowed a period of two months to return the form.
20. Nevertheless, we have had a disappointing response to the survey - only 21 questionnaires about the future of community councils were returned. Clearly, when dealing with such a small sample size it is not possible to draw any clear conclusions.
21. Fortunately, the results of the survey are strengthened by the focus groups and other one-to-one meetings with residents that have taken place. More information will also be available following the September round of community councils as we are distributing the questionnaires again.
22. **Question 1** asked an open question designed to ascertain what respondents valued the most in their local community council. Three ideas were most frequently cited - please see the table immediately below. Influencing decision-making was valued above all.

Valued the sharing of decision making and being able to influence decision making.	36%
Valued being able to find out about local issues, and going along to gain new information more generally.	28%
Valued the way community councils have improved the accountability of the council, and enabled residents to scrutinise what we do.	14%

23. Other less frequently cited, but important ideas, were that community councils help to tackle hate crime, that they build local identity, allow residents to meet each other, and enable discussions about roads. Two people said that they did not value community councils.
24. **Question 2** asked what respondents think is the most important function of community councils. This was a closed question, and the result is reported in the table below.

Being able to influence local decisions, e.g. planning, traffic management.	40%
Debating local issues of concern with councillors and other residents.	30%
Having your say and getting involved in consultations, e.g. Southwark Spending Challenge.	25%
Don't know.	5%

25. Interestingly, the results from question 1 where people wrote up their own answers in an empty box, and question 2 where the questionnaire asked respondents to tick a box against pre-set answers, were remarkably similar.

26. **Question 3** asked how effective are community councils are in relation to the main three headings in question 2.

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
Influencing decision making.	21%	37%	26%	0%	5%	11%
Debating local issues.	33%	33%	6%	11%	6%	11%
Getting involved in consultations.	16%	50%	11%	6%	6%	11%

27. The results show a consistent and clear majority of respondents thinking that community councils are good or very good at all of these tasks. However, about a quarter of respondents thought that community councils were average, or poor, or very poor.

28. The majority thought that debating local issues was the most effective function of community councils.

29. **Question 4** asked an open question about what improvements should be made to community councils. There were 13 different ideas, none of which stood out as any more or less popular than the others. The 13 ideas are:

- Ask local opinion before drafting plans and proposals.
- Keep as it is.
- Organise residents by streets.
- Less time for officer reports.
- Feedback to residents.
- Less items/keep to time.
- Allow more shared decision making.
- More issues about hate crime.
- Have more workshops.
- Give more powers and money to community councils and make savings elsewhere in the council.
- Improve community council - cabinet interactions.
- Encourage more people, especially young people, to attend.
- Meet at weekends.

30. **Question 5** asked respondents to rank possible ways to reduce the costs of community councils. The options provided on the questionnaire were to:

- Have fewer meetings.
- Have larger community council areas.
- Changes to decision making powers.
- Reduce publicity for meetings.
- Reduce activities at meetings, such as job fairs, films and food.
- Reduce venue costs and equipment costs.

There were few clear results from this ranking, with respondent's views never really coalescing into any overwhelming direction. The only option that was supported by most of the respondents was to reduce venue and equipment costs.

31. **Question 6** asked for suggestions from the respondents about how to reduce the costs, and a very wide variety of ideas were provided back, which were:

- Bermondsey & Rotherhithe to join.
- Hold meetings in homes.
- Use modern technology/web.
- Less food/drink.
- Ask volunteers to help.
- Buy not hire equipment.
- Less staff at meetings.
- Do not merge Walworth.

32. **Question 7** asked for examples of how resident's views have influenced decisions at community councils. The Cleaner, Greener, Safer grants and the Community Council Fund were the most popular ways for residents to influence decisions, closely followed by being able to influence planning and traffic & transport decision making.

Common themes

33. A number of common themes emerge from the consultation work we have undertaken, namely:

- People value community councils to have their say on local issues, and crucially receive feedback in response.
- Views differ as to whether this needs to be linked to formal decision-making powers or not, but emphasis seems to be more on having a voice and being informed of an outcome.
- A number of improvements could be made to increase engagement e.g. better feedback around outcomes, changing format and times of meetings, improved resident input to agendas, less formality
- People understand the need to make savings, but are not keen on larger areas, having less meetings or reducing costs in other ways are far preferred

Policy implications

34. The terms of reference for the Democracy Commission phase two have been drawn up within the specific context of current council policies, plans and strategies. The information gathered during the second phase of the commission's work will provide opportunities for the council to engage in debate with residents and will potentially provide decision makers with new information when developing council policy.

Community impact statement

35. The aim of the Democracy Commission is to bring the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. The work of the Commission will be led by the Community Engagement team that has significant experience in leading work of this nature,

aimed at improving the voices of local people in decision-making. The engagement activity will be underpinned by principles of equality and human rights (including the new public sector equality duty which comes into force in April 2011) and will reflect the diverse residents of the borough.

Resource implications

36. No additional budget is required for the setting up of the commission and stage two of its work. Any costs will be covered within existing resources. The commission will be required to bear in mind the need to keep under review the officer and other resources required to support its work and the implementation of its recommendations within the context of increasing resource constraints on the council.
37. The task of the Commission will be to deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012 as agreed in the council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2011-2014.

Consultation

38. The work of the commission includes public consultation and involvement: public meetings and conferences, questionnaires, focus group and recording vox pops. This work will be developed and improved upon during phase two.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission Phase 2 reports and agenda	Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TZ	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Community Councils Questionnaire
Appendix 2	Member and officer consultation report

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance		
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement		
Version	Final		
Dated	15 September 2011		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included	
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	No	
Finance Director	No	No	
Cabinet Member	Yes	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	15 September 2011		



Have your say on the future for Community Councils

Democracy Commission Phase 2

www.southwark.gov.uk

Dear resident/local partner

We are seeking the views of local people as part of a review of Community Councils. The enclosed questionnaire will inform the second phase of the Democracy Commission; an initiative designed to bring the council closer to residents, more accountable to them and connected with their concerns.

The second phase of the Democracy Commission, which started in May 2011, involves a review of the eight community councils that will include:

1. the need to deliver a 25% reduction (£344,000) in the total cost of the Community Councils to take effect from 1st April 2012
2. discussion of the role and function of Community Councils. This will include looking at boundaries, decision-making powers, the number and frequency of meetings, and their success in building stronger communities and engaging local people in decision-making
3. establishing how Community Councils can be improved by identifying good practice and finding out what residents value most

Your input to this process is really appreciated, and all responses received will be treated confidentially.

Please complete the following questions and return to Kevin Dykes, Senior Involvement Officer (Inclusion), Southwark Council, PO Box 64529, London, SE1 5LX, or via officers at your local Community Council by Monday 29 August 2011.

If you would like an electronic version of the questionnaire, please ask officers at your local Community Council, or contact kevin.dykes@southwark.gov.uk or 020 75255601

Thank you

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name	
Address	
Email	
Your Community Council Area	

1. What is the one thing that you value most about your local Community Council?

2. What do you think is the most important function of Community Councils? Please select one option.

Being able to influence local decisions , e.g. planning, traffic management	Debating local issues of concern with Councillors and other residents	Having your say and getting involved in consultations e.g. Southwark Spending Challenge	Don't know

3. How effective is your Community Council in relation to each of these functions?

Influencing local decisions

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know

Discussion and debate on local issues

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know

Consultations

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know

4. What one improvement would you make to Community Councils? For example, should certain functions or powers be removed or enhanced?

5. Please rank the following ways of reducing the costs of Community Councils by putting a 6 by the option you think is best, a 5 by your next favourite option...down to 1 by the option you think is the worst.

Less meetings	Larger community council areas	Changes to the decision-making powers	Reducing publicity for meetings	Reducing activities at meetings such as job fairs, films, food	Reducing venue and equipment costs

6. Do you have any other suggestions as to how the costs of Community Councils could be significantly reduced?

7. Do you have any specific examples of how residents' views have influenced decisions through your local Community Council?

Item No. 8	Classification: Open	Date: 3 August 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission – Phase 2
Report title:		Member and Officer Consultation on Community Councils	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Democracy Commission notes the contents of this report which presents summaries of some member and staff consultation on the core functions of community councils.
2. That the Democracy Commission identifies ways to incorporate useful suggestions and feedback into its recommendations for savings and improvements to community councils.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. As outlined in the Commission's workplan, a series of workshops and focus groups have been conducted over the past couple of months to obtain qualitative data from members and officers around the core functions of community councils.
4. Members and officers were asked to share their views in relation to the three core functions of community councils (below) as well as on ways to make savings:
 - decision-making
 - engagement and participation
 - consultation

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Feedback from Community Council Chairs and Vice-Chairs

5. A workshop was held at the May meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of community councils to inform phase two of the work of the Commission.
6. The main issues raised are summarised below.

Decision making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of decision making at community councils • Decision making is less important than discussing issues of local importance • Community councils contrast to Council Assembly which can be seen as a rubber stamp for decisions taken by the Cabinet • Devolved budgets are a popular decision making role of the community councils and people can see a direct effect on their community from those decisions • Taking planning decisions at community councils is important • Some applications are out of time when they come to community councils meetings which means applicants can lodge an appeal for non-determination • Community councils give residents the opportunity to influence decision makers
Engagement and participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement depends on the issues on the agenda • Power point presentations can often be ineffective at engaging community council audiences • It can be better if councillors give presentations rather than officers • Community councils are a good introduction to getting involved with the council • Community councils can empower the community • Engagement needs to reach beyond existing limits and needs to find away to attract new people to the community council meetings • Could Southwark Life be used to promote the community council meetings? • Community councils are good at giving access to people residents wouldn't usually get to talk to: officers, TfL, police etc • It is important to involve other organisations such as the voluntary sector • It's good to involve people in the decision making process • Having specific local issues or themes tends to increase attendance at meetings • The community councils are not so good at attracting different people to attend • Workshops and interactive activities work really well • Some community councils leaflet every door with meeting details and engage with local community leaders to ensure agenda reflect the needs of the community
Consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be difficulties in reaching all areas of the community in terms of consultation • Some councillors promote council consultations themselves by leaflet drops and getting out and talking to residents

7. Members also discussed the need for the Democracy Commission to make recommendations which would make savings. There was a willingness to consider various options in each area to reduce meeting costs e.g. around refreshments, publicity, venue hire, equipment. Members were keen to have a look at meeting budgets and requested that officers present a break down.

8. In terms of planning, some members felt that this could be combined with regular community council meetings, whilst others considered that it would not be feasible or appropriate.
9. At the June meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs the idea of a joint meeting with the Democracy Commission was suggested. This would provide a further opportunity for Commission members to explore some of the issues raised.
10. In terms of engaging other ward councillors, it is proposed that this should be linked to the September round of community council meetings, which Democracy Commission members will be attending. Members will be able to contribute to discussions, and in addition, officers can also prepare a specific feedback form.

Feedback from officers

11. Four focus groups have been conducted throughout July with staff from those departments working with community councils, including: planning and regeneration; communities, law and governance; transport; environment; housing and children's services.
12. Feedback from officers has been summarised and grouped into the three main community council functions. Feedback on decision-making functions is as follows:

Decision making
<p>General points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops are very valuable and engage people if done well. • The community council themes sometimes work well with decision-making when a consultation topic coincides with or compliments the theme. However, sometimes they do not compliment one another. A solution could be for themes to be scheduled to go with particular types of consultation exercises. A consultation diary for the municipal year was also suggested. • Good forward planning is important so sufficient notice about decisions being taken to meetings is given – a shared forward plan was suggested. • Noted that not all residents go to community councils or get involved at meetings. Some residents want to have more of a say, others just happy to understand process so they can influence it themselves. • Chairs are vital to deciding how meetings are run. • People can get concerned at length of time it takes to get decisions implemented or issues resolved. Sometimes complex due to different agencies being involved. <p>Specific decision-making functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to get local perspective e.g. in terms of section 106 decisions which go to main planning committee meetings. • Clarity on roles of different meetings and decision makers would be welcomed e.g. parking zone consultation boundaries. • Planning application decision-making is useful as they have local knowledge. • Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) necessitates that planning and some transport policies need to be subject to consult at community councils. However time available at different community council varies depending on relevance of the issue, other agenda items and notice given by department. Some officers felt that

Decision making

SCI should be reviewed.

- Resource implications associated with officers attending community councils, especially in times of reducing staff numbers. Suggested that more paper briefings from officers may be the way forward, which some CCs already do.
- Full meeting workshops can be useful, e.g. planning area action plans.

13. Feedback from staff on engagement and participation functions:

Engagement and participation

- Topics, timing and engagement all affect participation. Themed meetings work well.
- Discussion about how to reach out beyond regular attendees to engage hard to reach communities. It was noted that different venues bring people in and some CCs move around depending on the availability of venues.
- Relevance of the agenda is key to engagement, and attracting people from different backgrounds.
- Particular agenda items and issues will attract more diverse groups of people e.g. community fund, job fairs
- Sub-groups are good for engaging people on a particular issue e.g. transport.
- Measuring engagement is about more than attendance, it's also about supporting local networks (interest groups and service-delivery groups) and linking them into meetings, organising events, ongoing dialogue and relationship-building with local groups and residents, capacity building, organising sub-groups etc. Community councils are not the only way to engage, e.g. linking up with faith groups, trade associations, business, young families and tenants and residents associations.
- Many attendees are also community champions that then access their own networks – we are reaching out more widely than just the headcount
- It is great that the council has sustained 40-60 people attending across the areas for several years.
- Some noted positive impact of having external speakers such as cabinet members at meetings.
- Having an e-newsletter has helped encourage participation and info-sharing.
- Agenda-setting is important. E.g. some CCs prioritise public questions so they are taken early in the meeting which seems to work well in their areas.

14. Feedback from staff on consultation function:

Consultation

- Noted that it important the reason for and scope of consultation is set out so there is clarity about what is expected and type of consultation/officer input required.
- Suggested that the council needs a consultation diary/schedule in line with municipal year – other local authorities do this.
- Complicated policy documents and jargon put people off.
- Consultations should be well structured and present clear options for people to consider.
- Consultations can work well e.g. Area Action Plans and Burgess Park.
- Variable quality of power point presentations can often make them ineffective for

Consultation
<p>consulting with community council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People like maps, interactive presentations with photos, or items to touch

Policy implications

15. The terms of reference for the Democracy Commission phase two have been drawn up within the specific context of current council policies, plans and strategies. The information gathered during the second phase of the commission's work will provide opportunities for the council to engage in debate with residents and will potentially provide decision makers with new information when developing council policy.

Community impact statement

16. The aim of the Democracy Commission is to bring the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. The work of the Commission will be led by the Community Engagement team that has significant experience in leading work of this nature, aimed at improving the voices of local people in decision-making. The engagement activity will be underpinned by principles of equality and human rights (including the new public sector equality duty which comes into force in April 2011) and will reflect the diverse residents of the borough.

Resource implications

17. No additional budget is required for the setting up of the commission and stage two of its work. Any costs will be covered within existing resources. The commission will be required to bear in mind the need to keep under review the officer and other resources required to support its work and the implementation of its recommendations within the context of increasing resource constraints on the council.
18. The task of the Commission will be to deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012 as agreed in the council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2011-2014.

Consultation

19. The work of the commission includes public consultation and involvement: public meetings and conferences, questionnaires, focus group and recording vox pops. This work will be developed and improved upon during phase two.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission Phase 2 reports and agenda	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 July 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		25 July 2011

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 22 September 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission – Phase 2
Report title:		Area committees in other local authorities	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Democracy Commission note the contents of this report which examines how area committees and/or forums and devolved decision-making is are handled by other local authorities.
2. That the Democracy Commission use this information to inform its recommendations for savings and improvements to community councils.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. As outlined in the Commission’s workplan, officers have undertaken a data gathering exercise aimed at identifying useful and interesting area committee/forum models from other local authorities, particularly in the context of delegated decision-making.
4. At the June meeting of the Commission, members suggested that officers should focus on local authorities that shared some of the following characteristics with Southwark:
 - socio-demography and location
 - significant level of delegated decision-making to area forums
 - emphasis on community engagement
5. Members were particularly keen to find out about innovative approaches other authorities have taken to effectively engaging local people, without high levels of delegated decision making. This would be particularly valuable information in the context of the need to identify the required savings to community council budgets.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Local authorities in inner London

6. The following inner London boroughs have been selected to inform this report on area committee models. None have formal decision-making powers:

Local authority	Type of area committee/forum structure	Level of devolved decision-making	Comparison with Southwark
Lambeth	Some area forums e.g. Brixton but no formal council involvement. Led by residents and voluntary sector.	None. See Appendix 1 for more detail.	Similar socio-demographics No formal council support role
Tower Hamlets	Local Area Partnerships (now defunct)	LAPs may still exist to deliver service / council activities, but there are no more meetings, or any other localised decision making.	Inner London borough No area committee structure
Westminster	Six Area Forums held across the borough, three times per year. They focus on providing local people with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on Council services • a mechanism to have their say on any issue in their local area or related to Council business • an opportunity to put forward suggestions to councillors for allocating their Neighbourhood Funds • details of actions raised and monitored 	None. The Neighbourhood Fund provides £46,000 per ward. Local councillors have been given an annual budget since April 2008 to spend on local projects in their wards. The budgets are intended to enable councillors to address local issues and priorities that matter most to residents.	Inner London borough Devolved budgets but not formal decision-making
Islington	Currently none. Area committees were introduced in May 2002 as part of the local government modernisation programme and ran until April 2011. There used to be five area committees involving local councillors and residents in a format similar to regular community council meetings. Each area committee was allocated £80,000 which they	None	Inner London borough Emphasis on engagement and allocation of relatively small sums.

	could give to local projects. Local funding is now allocated by the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee.		
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Local authorities with some devolved decision-making at a local level

7. The following sample of local authorities that have devolved decision-making through an area forum/committee has been gathered to inform this review:

Local authority	Type of area committee/forum structure	Level of devolved decision-making	Comparison with Southwark
Kingston	Four Neighbourhood Committees consisting of three, four and five wards). The meetings are formal council meetings and strategic in nature. There is no special focus on engagement	Committees make decisions about local issues such as traffic, parking, highways, planning applications and have local budgets for these services See Appendix 1 for more detail.	Outer London Borough Much wider scope of devolved decision making, but less community engagement
Barnet	Area Environment Sub-Committees and Residents Forums (3), based on constituency boundaries.	The subcommittees have limited devolved decision making (executive) powers. Forums are chaired by a councillor but are consultative only. They take place before the environment sub-committee meeting. Residents can raise environmental issues (previously any issues) by submitting questions until 6pm the day before the meeting to which a written response will be given (or an officer will come along to the meeting in person)	Outer London Borough Only limited engagement function

Local authorities with no devolved decision-making at a local level

8. The following sample of local authorities that have no devolved decision-making at a local level, or have no area forum/committee structures at all:

Local authority	Type of area committee/forum structure	Level of devolved decision-making	Comparison with Southwark
Waltham Forest	<p>Community Ward Forums (one per ward attended by 3 ward members, officers, members of the public)</p> <p>Community Councils replaced by Community Ward Forums in Jan 2011 in response to the views of residents. Greater emphasis on engagement</p> <p>Resulted in savings of £150,000 and one staff post</p>	<p>No devolved decision making. Community ward forum meetings are open to individual residents, community groups and business representatives who want to help shape and improve their neighbourhood.</p> <p>See Appendix 1 for more detail.</p>	<p>Used to have community councils with some decision-making powers.</p> <p>Now has opted for engagement only model.</p>
Lewisham	<p>Local assemblies in each of the 18 wards.</p> <p>Meet four times a year to discuss local priorities and create an action plan. Involve police and voluntary sector.</p>	<p>No devolved decision making or obvious role in consultations.</p> <p>They have an Assembly Fund of 20k approx per ward.</p>	<p>London borough</p> <p>Strong emphasis on community engagement and the role of councillors as community champions.</p>
Hounslow	<p>Area committees (5)</p> <p>Give local citizens a greater say in council affairs and are responsible for monitoring local service provision including planning and highway related matters; and for other local decisions that may be delegated by the executive.</p> <p>They involve councillors for each particular area and meetings are held in public.</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>The planning meetings used to decide planning applications, but these meetings were abolished in May 2011.</p>	<p>Used to have both engagement and planning meetings, similar to Southwark.</p>

	<p>Until May 2001, each area had separate meetings to look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring (to review and monitor services) • Planning (to consider and allocate local planning and traffic management budgets) 		
Windsor	<p>Town Forums (2) - Maidenhead Town Forum and the Windsor Town Forum</p> <p>Consultative forums acting in an advisory capacity to the Cabinet</p> <p>Membership agreed at full council</p>	<p>None currently, but there is potential to devolve some decision-making powers to them at a future date.</p> <p>The Forums work with local residents, businesses, organisations (both public and private sector).</p>	
Harrow	None	<p>Harrow are currently undertaking a review of their operations and may consider area forums/committees, as part of a transformational agenda.</p>	Outer London Borough
Bromley	None	<p>Initially had some sub-committees (north, central and south), but these were abandoned due to low attendance, and an opinion by members that they duplicate the function of members' surgeries and other organisations.</p>	Outer London Borough

Local authorities in other parts of the UK

9. The following are examples of how city councils and authorities in other parts of the UK use the area committee model to engage with local people:

Local authority	Type of area committee/forum structure	Level of devolved decision-making	Comparison with Southwark
Manchester	<p>No area committees. Instead there are Ward Co-ordinators and Ward Support Officers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure that a Ward Plan and Ward Newsletters are produced • make sure that local people are consulted about what is important to them • respond to local people's concerns about Council and other public services • work closely with local ward councillors • hold Ward Co-ordination Group meetings <p>There are also 6 Overview & Scrutiny committees, including a Communities & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee (which looks at the city as a whole not per neighbourhood).</p>	None	<p>City council in north west.</p> <p>No area committees, but equivalent of neighbourhoods team.</p>
Newcastle	<p>Ward committees – focus on engagement.</p> <p>Ward Coordinators are taking the lead role in revamping the way in which Ward Committees engage with local people e.g. by using themed meetings.</p>	None	Use of themed meetings. But no decision-making powers.
Salford	Eight neighbourhoods,	None, though some	Similar

	<p>each with a Neighbourhood Team which consists of: representatives from the council, Police, Fire Service, Primary Care Trust, housing agencies, and other organisations.</p> <p>Structure is being reviewed at the moment.</p> <p>Each area has a Community Committee which provides a forum for local residents to set community priorities and decide on how devolved budgets are allocated.</p> <p>Also often have sub groups to focus on specific issues e.g. parks</p>	<p>influence on devolved budgets (100k per neighbourhood).</p>	<p>structure of neighbourhoods teams and meetings.</p> <p>However, ongoing review may lead to structure being abolished.</p>
Wolverhampton	<p>14 Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) provide the means for local communities to work with service providers and commissioners in shaping the design, planning and delivery of public services.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Councillors not involved in LNPs</p>
Liverpool	<p>None, engagement done through a team of Neighbourhood Managers. This is under review.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No area committee structure or decision-making at local level.</p>

10. The tables below indicate that there are a range of approaches to devolved decision-making across London, and the UK. Of the inner London boroughs highlighted above, not one has a comparable area committee structure to Southwark in terms of the devolution of formal decision-making. Rather, there is more a tendency towards devolved local budgets.
11. In terms of the broader picture, there seems to be a movement away from formal decision-making (Kingston being the notable exception), and towards improving engagement, local debate and community leadership and ownership e.g. through local budgets. There are likely to be a number of contributory factors to this, ranging from the unfavourable financial climate, to the lack of local interest. In some cases, area committee structures are completely absent, and other

methods – such as officer-led engagement or voluntary sector partnerships – are used to involve local people in decisions that affect their community.

Policy implications

12. The terms of reference for the Democracy Commission phase two have been drawn up within the specific context of current council policies, plans and strategies. The information gathered during the second phase of the commission's work will provide opportunities for the council to engage in debate with residents and will potentially provide decision makers with new information when developing council policy.

Community impact statement

13. The aim of the Democracy Commission is to bring the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. The work of the Commission will be led by the Community Engagement team that has significant experience in leading work of this nature, aimed at improving the voices of local people in decision-making. The engagement activity will be underpinned by principles of equality and human rights (including the new public sector equality duty which comes into force in April 2011) and will reflect the diverse residents of the borough.

Resource implications

14. No additional budget is required for the setting up of the commission and stage two of its work. Any costs will be covered within existing resources. The commission will be required to bear in mind the need to keep under review the officer and other resources required to support its work and the implementation of its recommendations within the context of increasing resource constraints on the council.
15. The task of the Commission will be to deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012 as agreed in the council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2011-2014.

Consultation

16. The work of the commission includes public consultation and involvement: public meetings and conferences, questionnaires, focus group and recording vox pops. This work will be developed and improved upon during phase two.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission Phase 2 reports and agenda	Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TZ	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Area Committee Case Studies.

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance		
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement		
Version	Final		
Dated	15 September 2011		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included	
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	No	
Finance Director	No	No	
Cabinet Member	Yes	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			15 September 2011

Area Committee Case Studies

1. London Borough of Waltham Forest

The London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) introduced Community Ward Forums which replaced Community Councils in January 2011. The ward forum meetings take place three times a year and are attended by the three relevant ward members, officers and members of the public. Community Councils in Waltham Forest had more limited formal decision making powers than their Southwark equivalents, and smaller budgets. The change from Community Councils to Community Ward Forums was put in place after feedback was received from residents who expressed a wish for more localised forums. The change resulted in savings of £150k and in one post being deleted.

In terms of the forum meetings, officers have described these as being informal engagement forums. They are open to individual residents, community groups and business representatives who want to help shape and improve their neighbourhoods. They are advertised as providing an opportunity for local people to get together, meet their ward councillors, and discuss the important issues affecting their area.

Significantly, the forums have no formal decision making powers. Each ward is allocated £10k annually to be spent on improvements to the area. All projects must benefit residents in the ward. Voluntary, community, sports or arts groups are not able to directly apply for this funding. Rather the projects are delivered by the council or its partners. There is a discussion on how this money is to be allocated at one meeting during the year, and the forums then put together recommendations on what they would like to see funded. These recommendations are formally decided on by the Assistant Director of 'Residents first' in consultation with the three ward councillors.

2. Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

The Royal Borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames (RBK) has four Neighbourhood Committees. One of these covers three wards, two cover four wards each, and one covers five wards; their membership therefore also varies: They comprise nine, 12 or 15 ward councillors respectively.

The committees have devolved powers and make decisions about local issues such as traffic, parking, highways, planning applications, grants, youth clubs, parks and open spaces and local libraries; and decide on the local budgets for these services.

The committees also comment on planning policy, by making recommendations to planning committee, and on other documents like the climate change strategy. The committees also have a devolved down budget called Neighbourhood Improvement Fund which they use to fund projects to improve the local environment instead of well-being of the community.

The meetings themselves are formal council meetings and strategic in nature. While residents can have a say at the meeting, there is no special focus on engagement and sometimes meetings are only attended by members and officers, despite it being a public meeting. Attendance by members of the public can vary depending on the topics discussed. The meetings link in with and field the views of partner organisations, for example the police or business improvement districts.

It is worth noting that Kingston do not have an individual decision-making (IDM) process for cabinet members.

3. London Borough of Lambeth

There are no formal geographically based committees in Lambeth.

Since 2008, town centre offices have not had a community development role in Lambeth. However, there are area forums which operate within Lambeth and fulfil this role. The forums are, however, not council bodies, but community-led forums some of which have grown out of, or are the successors to the Town Centre Forums which had been supported by the Town Centre Offices (TCO). The TCOs which do still exist now have a more traditional business focus, rather than their previous community development focus.

There are currently 12 forums in Lambeth which vary in size from those which mirror old Town Centre areas such as Streatham and Norwood through to much smaller geographic areas such as Loughborough Junction. There are also areas of the borough which are not currently covered by any of these forums.

The Lambeth Forum Network is an umbrella group for the various forums which meets regularly and is aiming to be fully constituted by the end of 2011. The forums are predominantly made up of residents/volunteers. Although councillors participate in their meetings, they are not formal council meetings and as such have no formal decision making powers. Some of the forums are also part of multi-functional voluntary organizations, such as the Stockwell Partnership.

The council supports the 12 forums with two officers whose role is to provide capacity building support. The Lambeth Forum Network is assigned a budget of £100k for the current financial year which is held by the council and for which the forums have to submit bids. In order to qualify for this funding, the forums must fulfil the stipulations laid out in the council's "standard conditions of grant aid" which ensures a high degree of transparency and accountability.

Analysis of residents that attend community councils in different areas

Community Council Historical Attendance Data (2006-2010)

Community Council Area	2006	Number of mtgs & (Ave)	2007	Number of mtgs & (Ave)	No* data 2008	No* data 2009	2010	Number of mtgs & (Ave)	2011	Number of mtgs & (Ave)	Total
Dulwich	444	7 (63)	472	8 (59)			348	6 (57)	198	4 (50)	1462
Camberwell	358	6 (59)	296	7 (42)			292	6 (44)	190	3 (93)	1136
Walworth	470	7 (67)	364	6 (60)			352	6 (58)	372	4 (50)	1558
Borough & Bankside	374	6 (62)	483	8 (60)			233	6 (38)	196	4 (49)	1247
Bermondsey	464	8 (58)	353	9 (39)			359	6 (59)	248	4 (62)	1424
Rotherhithe	449	8 (56)	378	9 (42)			303	6 (50)	177	4 (44)	1307
Peckham	428	6 (71)	324	8 (40)			267	6 (44)	271	4 (68)	1290
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	392	6 (65)	571	8 (71)			263	6 (44)	248	4 (62)	1474
Total	3379		3241				2122		1900		10898

* NB Data for 2008 and 2009 unreliable or missing due to system/database fault

Attendance more than 1 CC

Dulwich	Since Jan 2010, 0 person also attended any other CC
Camberwell	Since Jan 2010, 1 person also attended Dulwich
Walworth	Since Jan 2010, 4 people also attended Borough and Bankside
Borough & Bankside	Since Jan 2010, 4 people also attended Walworth
Bermondsey	Since Jan 2010 of the total attendance - 23 also attended Rotherhithe, 2 also attended a Walworth, 3 also attended a Borough & Bankside meeting and 1 attended a Nunhead & Peckham Rye
Rotherhithe	Since Jan 2010 of the total attendance - 20 also attended Bermondsey, 1 also attended a Walworth.
Peckham	Since Jan 2010, 3 people also attended Nunhead & Peckham Rye CC, one of whom works for the local voluntary sector
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	Since 2010, 3 people also attended Peckham CC

Democracy Commission Distribution List

Members and Reserves

Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)	1
Councillor Mark Glover	1
Councillor Helen Morrissey	1
Councillor Columba Blango	1
Councillor Michael Mitchell	1
Councillor Paul Noblet	1
Councillor Cleo Soanes	1

Council Officers

Tim Murtagh, Community Council, 2nd Floor Hub 4, 160 Tooley Street	1
Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement, 2 nd Floor, Hub 2, 160 Tooley Street	1
Ebony Riddell Bamber, Community Engagement, 2 nd Floor, Hub 2, 160 Tooley Street	1
Darryl Telles, Community Engagement, 2 nd Floor, Hub 2, 160 Tooley Street	1
Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager, 2nd Floor Hub 4, 160 Tooley Street	1
Alexa Coates, Principal Constitutional Officer, 2nd Floor Hub 4, 160 Tooley Street	1

Total distribution 22