

Democracy Commission

Wednesday 3 August 2011
7.00 pm
Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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: 26 July 2011



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

Paper to be presented at the meeting

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Opportunity for residents in attendance to comment on any matters raised during the meeting.

Date: 26 July 2011



DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Friday 8 July 2011 at 6.30 pm at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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

OTHER MEMBERS

PRESENT: Councillor Poddy Clarke

OFFICER

SUPPORT: Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement
Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager
Ebony Riddell-Bamber, Community Participation Manager
Darryl Telles, Neighbourhoods Manager
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 Councillor Columba Blango.

3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.

5. STAFFING ROLES

The Democracy Commission considered the information set out in the closed agenda in closed session.

At the conclusion of the closed business the meeting returned to open session.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the chair.

7. LOCALISM

Stephen Douglass introduced the report on the Localism Bill. Members discussed in general terms the possible impact on community councils and the changing nature of devolved powers.

Members discussed the public sitting on sub-groups and the existence of co-opted members on certain other committees.

8. PLANNING AT COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Stephen Douglass introduced the report on planning options requested by the commission at the April meeting. Members discussed retaining the planning function at community councils, the removal of it and the possibility of developing another model. Each would result in a different level of saving to the community council budget.

Members expressed their support for retaining some planning function at member level which would mean there was still a degree of accountability. There was concern over the number of applications that were decided out of date by community councils. Members also discussed the level of responses required before an application was triggered and referred to community council planning meetings. Several expressed the view that it should be raised from its current level of three and that in turn would reduce the number of applications and meetings.

Members looked at the sub-committee models and discussed the North-South and East-

West possibilities. They sought clarity on what would happen to decisions no longer taken by community councils under any future arrangements and said that if the burden was simply passed to the main planning committee there may be little point in making the change.

The chair said that the options and scope in the planning department to consider further delegated applications required exploration with planning officers.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

In response to public questions, Ebony Riddell-Bamber explained that questionnaires on the process had been circulated at the June round of community councils. Members of the commission would be attending the September round of meetings to consult directly with those who attend community councils.

Members requested that the consultation process and dates of forthcoming consultation meetings be publicised on the website, in one place.

Action: Ebony to circulate the list of commission members who will address the September round of community councils and consult the public.

Council Assembly 6 July

The chair wanted to formally thank on behalf of the commission those who had contributed to making the Council Assembly at Walworth Academy on 6 July 2011 such a success.

The positive impact of the deputations was noted along with the large number of young people who attended. Officers reported that they were following up the event with young people to find out how they felt about it generally.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Item No. 5	Classification: Open	Date: 3 August 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission
Report title:		Role and Purpose of Community Councils	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director Communities Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To consider the role and functions of community councils, particularly in relation to the environment.
2. To consider evidence provided by witnesses at this meeting in relation to the environment function of community councils.
3. To consider drafting any recommendations based on the evidence considered in the report and at this meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. This report looks at the role and purpose of community councils, including an overview of the environment functions they fulfill. Officers will be available to provide further detail on the environment function at this meeting.
5. The role and purpose of community councils can be split into three distinct areas:
 - Constitutional/formal decision making role
 - Engagement role
 - Consultative role
6. At the May meeting, the Commission was asked to consider how community councils balance the three areas of their responsibilities. Some of the information that was made available for that meeting is presented again in this report for further consideration. A broader overview of the role and function of community councils will provide the context necessary to enable the Commission to focus on the specific areas covered in this meeting.
7. This report examines these roles in the context of the budgetary savings required from the community council's budget. The task of the Commission is to make recommendations to cabinet and council which can deliver savings of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Constitutional/ formal decision making role

8. The community councils have a number of formal functions as set out in Part 3H of the council's constitution, extract attached at Appendix A. These formal functions are split into decision making and consultative/non-decision making. The community councils also have executive and non-executive functions. Non-Executive functions are delegated by Council Assembly and Executive functions are delegated by the Leader of the Council. The only non-executive decisions taken by community council relate to planning matters and these will be considered in more detail at the June meeting of the Commission. Any recommendations to amend the roles and functions of community councils need to be made to Council or the Leader of the Council depending on whether the function is non-executive or executive.
9. The Executive functions delegated to community councils include: the cleaner greener, safer capital programme, the community council fund, traffic management and appointment to local education authority governors to local nursery and primary schools.
10. Formal decisions require statutory processes to be followed in terms of the administration of community council meetings. Notice of meetings must be given 5 clear working days before meetings, any formal decision require reports which must be provided to members and made publically available 5 clear working days before the meeting. Minutes are produced to record the decisions taken by the community council and in the case of executive functions (which are subject to call-in) decision notices must be published in the 2 days following the meeting. The community council team provide the necessary constitutional support for the community council meetings.
11. Community councils also have formal consultative/non decision making roles for example in relation to environmental management issues and contract reviews. As this is a formal role the constitutional and legal process must be followed in a similar way as decisions, for example, reports must be published 5 clear working days before the meeting and included in the agenda and minutes of the discussion and outcomes produced.
12. Some of the decision making powers of the community councils are considered below. Any change in scope of powers needs to be considered in the legislative context. It is also worth noting as the Commission has discussed previously, meetings are the main cost of the community councils. Any change in role which increases the number of meetings increases the cost of community councils.
13. Care must be taken when, considering which powers could be extended and devolved, to acknowledge the impact that this could have on the agenda of meetings, in particular the ability of residents to participate and the ability for the agenda to be flexible to meet local needs. The successful balance between the formal decision making and community engagement role is discussed in more detail at paragraphs 28-29.

Environmental Management

14. Community councils have delegated powers to make recommendation on local contract variations to the strategic director of environment and the cabinet. They also have the power to appoint ward members to service on warden schemes steering groups. In terms of consultative/non-decision making community councils should receive regular reports on environmental issues and participate in contract reviews. In practice community councils have not received any formal reports on environmental management in 2010/11 although the environment department has provided support in terms of public questions and support environment themes at specific community council meetings.
15. No departmental payments are made to support this function.

Cleaner Greener Safer

16. Community councils approve the allocation of funds to cleaner greener safer capital schemes using the resources identified by cabinet. Resources are identified by the cabinet through an Individual Decision Maker (IDM) report. No resources have been allocated in 2009/10 and 2010/11 and officers are currently progressing projects from previous years.
17. Community councils also receive updates on Cleaner Greener Safer projects, usually at the request of the chair and reports on change control requests when funding needs moving around projects. No departmental payments are made to support this function.

Traffic Management Functions

18. The constitution sets out powers for community councils to determine local non-strategic matters for traffic management and determine objections to traffic management orders that are not strategic or borough wide. The community councils also have consultative/non-decision making roles on consultation for parking or traffic safety schemes, are to be consulted on the council's annual bid to Transport for London for transport funding (known as the Local Implementation Plan) and to be consulted on traffic management decisions of a strategic nature. Community councils receive traffic management reports on a quarterly basis.
19. The Public Realm Division, who report to the community councils on traffic management issues such as CPZ and disabled parking bays, has been consulted and they commented that the traffic management function works relatively well at community council.
20. Payments of £20,162 are made to the regeneration and environment departments to support this function.

Highways and Lighting capital scheme

21. In 2009 the then Executive Member for Environment agreed to allocate some funding for the highways and lighting capital schemes to community councils. Each community council was assigned £100,000 for highways schemes and £75,000 for lighting schemes. This was repeated in 2010/11. No departmental payments are made to support this function.

22. As recommended for the Community Council Fund this could be formalised in the constitution along a similar line to Cleaner, Greener, Safer by delegating the approval of funds to highways and lighting capital schemes, using the resources identified by cabinet.

Education Functions

23. Community councils make appointments of local education authority school governors to the governing bodies of nursery and primary schools within the community council area. The school governor development team has been consulted on how this function operates at community councils and in their view it works well. Officers from the governor development team do not attend community council meetings to present reports. A payment of £10,895 was made to Children's Services in 2010/11 for supporting this function at community councils.
24. The information councillors consider in making the appointments is restricted under the categories set out in paragraph 10.4 of the council's access to information procedure rules. This means that the public and press are excluded from community council meetings when these decisions are taken. This can be difficult from a practical point of view as members of the public often want to talk to councillors at the end of the meeting. Therefore, considering these appointments at the close of the meeting acts as a clear barrier to engagement. Excluding the public from community council meetings does not necessarily fit with the engagement role of the community councils as the public has no opportunity and no role in influencing these decisions.
25. The Voluntary Bodies Appointments Panel currently makes recommendations to the Strategic Director of Children's Services on appointments of local education authority school governors to the governing bodies of secondary schools in Southwark. If members are minded to remove the education function from community councils it is not recommended that this is moved to this panel and it is recommended that these decisions are taken at chief officer level as this would reduce the level of administration required in taking decisions. As previously discussed by the Commission any change which results in more meetings either by community councils or other committees or panels of the council will not incur the savings required.
26. There is a proposal that Overview & Scrutiny conduct a review into the appointment of school governors, although at the time of writing this report this has not been confirmed. If there is a scrutiny review any recommendations/outcomes will be reported to the Commission.

Community Project Bank

27. Community councils approve projects for inclusion within the community project bank. When projects are suggested for inclusion within the community council project banks the relevant community council consider reports on the matter. No departmental payments are made to support this function.

Community Council Fund

28. The Executive established the community council fund for all community council areas in a decision taken in November 2005 following pilots in Rotherhithe, Peckham and Dulwich. Each community council has £15,260 to support activities run by community groups for local people, which promote community cohesion. As this delegated function is not set out in the constitution the Commission may wish to recommend that this role is formalised in Part 3H. No departmental payments are made to support this function.

Deputations/Petitions/Public questions

29. The community council procedure rules and petition scheme set out the community councils' formal engagement role with members of the public. The constitution allows community council meetings to have a public question time on the order of business. In practice this works in very different ways across all community councils, for example some answers are given by councillors at the meeting and in some community councils questions are submitted in writing and written responses are provided at the next meeting.
30. Deputations can be made to community councils in a similar way to council assembly. Community councils receive a relatively low number of deputations as the less formal public question time tends to be used by members of the public to raise an issue.
31. Since December 2010 petitions can also be considered by community councils, the trigger for a debate at a community council meeting is 250 signatures. The limited experience to date has identified some issues. Often petitions do not meet the requirements of the petition scheme in that they do not have the required number of signatures or they have not been submitted in the required 10 clear working days before the meeting. In these instances members of the public are advised to submit a public question to raise their issue at the community council meeting.

Community Engagement Role

32. Community councils have been successful in balancing the constitutional and legal requirements of taking formal decisions and engaging effectively with local people. Being area based community councils give an opportunity for members to enhance their ward role by engaging with residents in their locality. Community councils are encouraged to be 'more than a meeting'. Many community councils have piloted ways to encourage this role by: supporting events, neighborhood walks and activities within meetings.
33. More detail on the engagement role of community councils is covered in the other reports presented at this meeting.

Consultative Role

34. As well as the formal consultative/non-decision making role, community councils are used as a discussion forum for consultations which affect the area. Some of the consultations which have been promoted or conducted at community councils in 2010/11 include: a fairer future for all, the transport plan, sex establishments licensing and residential car parking charges based on Co2 emissions.

35. Community councils are an established mechanism for consultation within the council and are effective in raising awareness of consultations. Some chairs have been critical of the lack of clearance on consultations before they are brought to community councils and there is sometimes a feeling of 'consultation overload'. Community councils have also identified that they alone should not constitute the only form of consultation as the audience at community councils meetings is not necessarily reflective of an entire community council area. The Commission may wish to consider how this important consultation role could be more effective.
36. Community councils were involved in the recent budget consultation: 'Fairer Future for All'. Cabinet members attended community council meetings to explain the budget process prior to the launch of community councils meetings. Residents were invited to participate in the spending challenge at community council meetings and various other organisations in Southwark. In the 'Southwark Spending Challenge' residents were asked to identify areas for investment and savings using red and green cheques. The results were reported to cabinet and fed into the budget process. Cabinet members returned to the community councils to explain the results at each of the community councils meetings. Residents were also invited to take part by giving comments via the website and contacting cabinet members directly.
37. These engagement roles all come under the paragraphs 3 and 4 of part 3H, the Commission may wish to consider recommending developing the wording of these paragraphs to recognise the influence and engagement role of the community councils

Other roles

38. Overview and Scrutiny have used community councils as a valuable source of local knowledge and experience on particular issues. For example at Walworth in November the chair of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee attended to get residents views on housing repairs. This was the theme of the community council meeting which coincided with a scrutiny review into the performance monitoring of the housing repairs service. The chair of the sub-committee asked a series of questions and the results were collated instantaneously at the meeting with the use of voting buttons. The results of the questions were used as evidence in formulating a set of recommendations on the housing repairs service which have since been considered by cabinet on 17 May 2011.
39. The link between community councils and overview and scrutiny has worked in an informal way and the Commission may wish to consider if this could be further developed.
40. There are other roles for community councils which it is suggested the Commission consider at the mid-point of the review if they wish:
- Developing annual themes link to MORI survey results of local priorities
 - Developing links to the voluntary sector- some community councils have a regular slot at meetings for community and voluntary groups especially those funded by the Community Council Fund
 - Developing reporting links to cabinet on specific local issues
 - Performance monitoring of specific local service issues

41. It is important to remember that meetings are the main community council cost so any development of roles must not add to the level of meetings or it is unlikely that the targeted savings will be reached. If the scope of the role and functions of community councils is amended there may also be an effect on resources required to support meetings, specifically in terms of officer time. If further support and development is required then this may take officers away from other tasks and there may be an impact on staff resources across the departments affected.

Policy implications

42. The Democracy Commission is being conducted within the context of current council policies, plans and strategies. Any recommendations of the Commission will be made to Council Assembly via the Cabinet. Any policy considerations will be taken into account by Cabinet if recommendations are implemented.

Community impact statement

43. This is a discussion paper and any specific proposals will be included in the final report of the Democracy Commission.

Resource implications

44. The task of the Commission is to make recommendations to deliver a saving of £344,000 across the community council budgets to take effect from 1 April 2012 as agreed in the council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2011-2014.

Legal/Financial implications

45. There are no specific legal or financial implications arising directly from this report. Any change to the role and functions of community councils needs to be considered in the legislative and constitutional framework. Changes to the role and functions of community councils may impact on the cost of community council meetings; this will be considered when the Commission makes its final recommendations.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Executive Report 8 November 2005	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Alexa Coates alexa.coates@southwark.gov.uk 020 7525 7385
Executive Member for Environment reports/decision notices 21 July 2009 and 29 March 2010	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Alexa Coates alexa.coates@southwark.gov.uk 020 7525 7385

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Constitution extract Part 3H

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Draft	
Dated	19 May 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
Head of Public Realm	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes/No	Yes/No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	25 July 2011	

PART 3H: COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Role and functions

1. To promote the involvement of local people in the democratic process and to bring decision making closer to local people.
2. To take decisions about local matters. At present community councils have delegated authority in the following key areas: local planning applications, the cleaner, greener, safer capital programme, traffic management, appointment of local education authority governors to local nursery and primary schools and community project banks.
3. To act as a formal consultation mechanism on council wide policies and strategies.
4. To be a focal point for discussion and consultation on matters that affects the area.

MATTERS RESERVED FOR DECISION

Planning functions (non-executive function)¹

Decision making

1. Consideration of the following categories of planning applications (including listed building consent, conservation area consent and advertising consent), where the development proposed involves the creation of fewer than 50 housing units or less than 3,500m² of commercial floor space or a mixed use development with less than 3,500m² of floor space, including applications for change of use, except where the application is clearly linked to another application which is to be considered by the planning committee:
 - a) Those which are significantly contrary to the provisions of the local development framework approved by the council for the purpose of development control, and which are recommended for approval
 - b) Those which are controversial, i.e. subject to 3 or more relevant objections (a "relevant objection" is defined as any objection except an objection which clearly does not raise any material planning considerations) or raise a major issue of a planning nature except where they are straightforward refusals²
 - c) Those requested by a ward member to be determined by elected members, subject to the request being agreed by the chair of the community council

¹ The powers of the community council in respect of planning functions are formally delegated to it by the planning committee. For the purposes of decision making it is constituted as a sub-committee of the main committee. The planning committee will consider and determine all planning applications on or near community council boundaries, which will have a material impact on the area of one or more neighbouring community councils. The strategic director of regeneration and neighbourhoods will determine when boundary proximity is a material factor.

² To be determined by the strategic director of regeneration and neighbourhoods.

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- d) All applications for the council's own developments except for the approval of:
- reserved matters and minor developments to which no relevant objections have been made
 - developments that are proposed by community councils.
- e) Those involving legal agreements, other than those in accordance with policy requirements, e.g. affordable housing, highway improvements, environmental work and other works required as part of a development proposal.
2. To consider the confirmation of tree preservation orders:
- Those which are the subject of a sustained objection (a "sustained objection" is defined as an objection that is maintained despite an attempt by officers to resolve it, or which officers consider incapable of resolution by negotiation).

Consultative/non decision making

3. To comment to planning committee on the proposed expenditure of funds over £100,000 secured through legal agreements under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any previous legislation where the site to which the agreement relates and the site(s) where expenditure will be incurred are in the same community council area.
4. To comment to planning committee on proposals for the designation of conservation areas including the adoption of conservation area character appraisals and detailed design guidance, and authorisations under article 4 of the Town and Country Planning Permitted Development Order 1995 affecting the area of the community council.
5. To comment to planning committee on proposals to adopt supplementary planning documents for development control purposes to guide the development of particular sites within the area of the community council.
6. To be consulted on all major and strategic schemes prior to consideration by the planning committee, subject to the consultation deadlines.
7. To receive regular information reports (at least quarterly) on local planning enforcement issues.

Environmental management (executive function)Decision making

8. Recommendations to the strategic director of environment and housing, on local contract variations.³
9. Recommendations to the cabinet on issues concerning major changes to contracts.
10. Appointment of ward members to serve on warden schemes steering groups.

³ Decisions regarding contract variation shall remain the responsibility of the strategic director (environment and housing).

Consultative/non decision making

11. To consider regular reports on environmental management issues, including street cleaning, refuse collection, abandoned vehicles and leisure centres.
12. To participate in contract reviews and be able to suggest service improvements and identify local priority issues.

Cleaner, greener, safer capital programme (executive function)Decision making

13. Approval of the allocation of funds to cleaner, greener, safer capital schemes of a local nature, using the resources identified by the cabinet, for example:
 - designing out dumping and fly-tipping
 - local playground improvements
 - local parks
 - improvement to local sports facilities
 - improvement to local community centres and youth facilities
 - eyesores and facelifts
 - improving ward-level communication routes and pathways
 - bins, street furniture etc.
14. To oversee and take responsibility for the development and implementation of the local schemes.
15. If successful in the bidding to the cabinet for strategic projects, to oversee and take responsibility for the development and implementation of the schemes.

Consultative/non decision making

16. Recommendation of bids to the cabinet for funding for capital schemes of a strategic nature as part of an open bidding process.

Traffic management functions (executive function)⁴Decision making

17. Determination of the following local non-strategic matters:
 - the introduction of single traffic signs
 - the introduction of short lengths of waiting and loading restrictions
 - the introduction of road markings
 - the introduction of disabled parking bays
 - the setting of consultation boundaries for consultation on traffic schemes.
18. Determination of objections to traffic management orders that do not relate to strategic or borough wide issues.

⁴ In respect of traffic matters that have a potential impact on more than one community council, the strategic director of environment and housing shall determine if boundary proximity is a material issue.

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19. To hear and determine traffic petitions and deputations that are of a non strategic nature.

Consultation/non-decision making

20. Following a strategic decision to introduce a parking or traffic safety scheme, community councils to be consulted on the detail of the schemes such as:
- the method of consultation and how it is undertaken
 - the type of traffic features to be introduced
 - where street furniture is positioned.
21. To be consulted on the borough spending plans (BSP), the council's annual bid to Transport for London for transport funding covering such things as local safety schemes and 20mph zones, before it is submitted to Transport for London.
22. To be consulted on decisions of strategic nature, such as whether to create parking zones or home zones.

Education functions (executive function)

Decision making

23. Appointment of local education authority school governorships to the governing bodies of nursery and primary schools within the area of the community council, from among the list of suitable persons maintained by the council, except in the circumstances set out in paragraph 23 below.
24. Where a school is eligible for intervention the strategic director of children's services or nominated officer (as set out in the departmental scheme of management) shall have the power to appoint local authority governors to the governing body, subject to consultation with the relevant cabinet member and the chair or vice-chair of the relevant community council consistent with the statutory time constraints placed on the strategic director as well as the widest possible engagement with other councillors, especially the ward councillors for the ward in which the school is located.

Community project bank (executive function)

Decision making

25. To approve projects for inclusion within the community project bank.

Notes

- a) All matters not reserved as above are delegated to the appropriate chief officer and head of service. All delegated matters can always be decided by the parent body. See also Part 3P: Matters delegated to officers.
- b) All planning matters not reserved as above are delegated to the appropriate chief officer, head of service or business unit manager
- c) Each chief officer and/or head of service in making decisions under the above scheme is required to do so within the internal scheme of management for their own department. This will include appropriate monitoring arrangements, and dissemination of information both internally and externally to the council.

Item No. 7	Classification: Open	Date: 3 August 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission
Report title:		Community Council Engagement	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Democracy Commission considers the examples of good practice contained in this report on Community Council engagement.
2. That the Democracy Commission takes these practices into account when finalising recommendations on the future role and purpose of Community Councils.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. On 25 January 2011, cabinet resolved that the Democracy Commission be tasked with phase 2 of their work, focusing on the role and powers of community councils in the context of budgetary savings. The Democracy Commission will make their final recommendations in December 2011.
4. At the first meeting of the second phase of the Democracy Commission Members agreed a workplan. As part of that workplan Members agreed to receive a report setting out examples of engagement at Community Councils (CC) so that they could gain an appreciation of the different ways that CC have tried to improve the way meetings are conducted.
5. The purpose of this report is to set out examples in Appendix 1 of how this has happened and Members are asked to consider these in the light of the need to review the role and purpose of Community Councils. It also gives an insight into some of the ways current budgets have been utilised to make CCs *'more than just a meeting'*.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Community Council budget savings

6. The review of community councils is to be undertaken within the context of the recently agreed council budget and the reductions in public expenditure. The task of the Commission will be to make recommendations to cabinet and council which can deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012.

7. At the last meeting of the Democracy Commission, members in a closed session looked at the role of the various staff deployed to assist the running and operation of meetings. This paper concentrates on what the authority gets from the engagement role i.e. to increase the range of different activities within meetings and encouraging greater participation and involvement from those attending meetings.
8. In each of the quadrants that make up Southwark, one case study is given in the appendix. These are Dulwich CC event at Dulwich Festival; Walworth CC Housing themed meetings; Peckham CC Health themed meetings and Bermondsey CC Employment and Training Fair.
9. From each example, Members are asked to consider:
 - The role and purpose of the initiative
 - The impact the initiative has had on the particular CC area
 - The opportunity for this to be shared across all CC areas
 - The key outcomes that have been achieved.
 - Whether reducing budgets will have an impact on these initiatives and make people less likely to attend and participate in CC meetings.
 - Alternative ways these initiatives could have been undertaken

Community Council Improvements

10. The existing Community Council areas were founded in 2003. Since then there have been two reviews of Community Councils in 2005 and 2008. Each has made recommendations to improve the way Community Councils operate.
11. The Community Council improvement strategy has been based on two defining principles agreed by Chairs and Vice Chairs in 2009: Firstly, to make meetings more engaging and involving a range of different activities to do this. Secondly, to utilise existing budgets more effectively to make the most of the money available to CCs.

More than just a meeting

12. As the case studies appended to this report show, a range of different ways have been used:
 - The most important way has been **themed meetings**, rather than CC meetings being an often diverse tick box exercise, i.e. the Council talking to the public on various plans, Chairs have been encouraged to establish themes to each specific meeting so that those with an interest in the particular topic e.g. transport or those in a particular group/community e.g. older people will be encouraged to attend.
 - Secondly, **different venues** have been used such as schools, shopping centres and community halls so that people from various neighbourhoods within a CC area can attend.

- More often, rather than just a stream of top-down presentations, **facilitated workshops** have been used, particularly where the theme has several topics such as area action plans.
 - Lastly **varying times** have been used by some CCs to attract those who find evening meetings, often after work, unsuitable and Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons have been tried.
13. Community councils have also been successful on engaging on specific regeneration issues such as the development of Elephant and Castle. Lend Lease the developers have attended Borough & Bankside Community Councils regularly in 2010/11. Regular attendance at the community council meetings has allowed Lend Lease to keep residents informed on what is happening with the development and has allowed them to develop their consultation plan and reach more people and organisations.
14. Community Councils have also been used in the preparation of area action plans most notably Rotherhithe with the Canada Water Area Action Plan and Peckham/Nunhead and Peckham Rye with the Peckham Area Action Plan. Residents were informed about the consultation process at the community council meetings and several workshops were held. The workshops which took place at the meetings referred to proposals for the preferred sites and options for development. Representatives from the developers use the community council meetings to update residents and councillors about pending planning applications for the sites. This practice is hoped to be repeated in Borough and Bankside following the agreement with Lend Lease over the re-development of the Elephant and Castle area.

Making the most of your money

15. As was discussed in previous Commission meetings, Community Councils have a publicity and marketing budget at their disposal to encourage engagement activities. They also have devolved budgets such as the Community Fund (CF) and Cleaner, Greener safer fund (CGS).
16. Some Community Councils such as Dulwich have had **ward-based meetings**. This has reduced the need for many leaflets and in this area one general poster has been used. This had freed up funds to hold forums (not actual CC meetings) with the public at existing events such as Dulwich Festival.
17. Some Community Councils have **interactive voting** at meetings which allows for those attending to participate directly and transparently in a decision-making process.. In the case of Walworth, this fed back into a Scrutiny review of the Housing repairs service.
18. Others have **activities and fairs** at meetings. Peckham has had a health theme all year and organised free health checks and healthy eating sessions.
19. More than one CC area has organised employment and training fairs where a range of providers have turned meetings into a showcase where

people can find out about local job opportunities.

20. Not everyone in a CC area would be able to attend meetings and many CCs have engaged people before meetings either through **vox-pops** or commissioning community groups to produce **films**.
21. In terms of delegated funds some Community Councils have used formats to involve those attending meetings. Versions of the *Monopoly* game and *Dragons Den* tv programme have been used to recommend allocations of CGS and CF to Members.

Attendance levels

22. Appendix 2 to this report includes up to date records of attendance at meetings, and Appendix 3 shows trends from previous years. This information has been updated to include figures from recent meetings and the actual headcount of residents taken at the meetings, rather than just those that have registered.
23. Members have requested additional detail on residents that attend meetings across community council boundaries. This data will be presented at the September meeting of the Commission.

Policy Implications

24. The aim of this report is to allow the Democracy Commission to consider how the Community Councils can operate better and making them more accountable to peoples concerns. .

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 Council Engagement Case Studies
Appendix 2	Updated Community Council Attendance Data
Appendix 3	Updated Community Council Historical Attendance Data

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	26 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
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	25 July 2011	

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDIES



Case Study – Dulwich Community Council Event

Climate Change themed event at the Dulwich Festival - May 2011

Background

The feedback from residents included making the Community Council business more accessible.

So in response it was decided to hold an Event in May as part of the Dulwich Festival. The Festival is a yearly event in Dulwich Park which brings together the community in a variety of family activities, entertainment and engagement to tackle local challenges. This year the theme was climate change.

We worked with Dulwich Going Greener and Dulwich Festival organising committee to arrange the event as an integral part of the Festivals last day on Sunday 15 May. A marquee for the DCC event was themed around the environment. We provided a speaker who was a local green campaigner to talk about what more residents and the council could do. He shared what local businesses are doing and good practice in joint working to make Dulwich greener.

The Event

In the marquee Members and participants held workshops to flipchart and record ideas on making Dulwich greener and what the council do more.

We had a question and answer session where the youth cc and other residents asked direct questions and suggestions to the Cllrs such as the possibility of allotments in certain areas.

Activities we linked with included;

- Air pollution measuring after the Village Road was closed to cars comparing the days reading to a normal day with traffic (Linked to the Southwark Clean Air strategy)
- Family activities that encourage carbon footprint reduction: Buggy race, fair, young artists, fun fair with entertainment including wildlife Falconry displays
- Community activities and groups exhibitions from local community groups and green initiatives

A range of different stakeholders participated including the African Education network, Norwood Road/Herne Hill Traders Association, Sydenham Hill TRA, East Dulwich Every Child matters, Dulwich Islamic Centre. The day was a success; it was the first time we did this so lessons were learnt.

Feedback from the residents was overwhelmingly positive. The fair was attended by hundreds of people, the Marquee event itself was attended 42 people. Feedback was very positive with 90% of participants saying that the event had fulfilled its objectives, 97% stating that they had gained something and 84% saying that they would attend another event.

We filmed the event and the video is available to be uploaded into the LBS In my area web pages

Outcomes

Various interest and residents groups came together to share their passion to making their area more environmentally sustainable and greener. Facilitation of meetings between the various groups resulted in joint work between the participants; i.e. 3 members of the Dulwich Youth CC will volunteer with the Dulwich Festival next year.

Dulwich Youth Community Council held Q & A session with the Callers, posing several questions and putting forward their ideas on possible resolutions. There were demonstrations on what people could do with waste, how they could recycle more, Air quality measuring, etc... The reading taken on the day will be compared with a normal day and fed back to the DCC meeting in the autumn

Dulwich now has a list of environmental concerns such as the need for Cycle Hire facilities; more supervised activities in Dulwich Park; a play area on Sydenham Hill Street; more recycling information and signposting; making progress to the Dulwich Cycling and walking network; promoting car clubs and increasing access to the Dulwich Park Community Garden rather than looking for new allotment space.



Case Study: Walworth Community Council Housing Themed Meetings

Wednesday 10 November 2010 - Walworth Housing, have your say
Monday 24 January 2011 - Your service, Your Choice

Background

The quality of housing repairs service in has been subject of continual concern for residents and councillors in the area where almost 60% of the stock is Council housing. Housing repairs are both internal and communal repairs around trades including plumbing, carpentry, electrical, roofing, drainage, plastering and void properties.

In the autumn of 2008 the repairs control centre won the prestigious UK Housing Award. Southwark's the key performance indicators (KPIs) on housing repairs showed very strong performance across a range of areas. At the same time anecdotal evidence from councillors' casework suggested serious problems with the quality of the housing repairs service. This disparity raised a number of questions and became the subject of Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee review in the summer of 2010.

The meetings

Walworth ward councillors held **two** community council themed **meetings** primarily focusing on housing repairs. More than 65 residents attended each meeting, voicing their concerns about the housing call centre and the quality of repairs undertaken, issues around appointments not being kept and the repair service generally. Walworth residents asked numerous questions of Cllr Gavin Edwards, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and Cllr Ian Wingfield cabinet member for Housing and officers. Residents participated in an **interactive electronic voting** exercise on a range of questions relating to the KPIs for housing repairs.

The chair of scrutiny sub-committee Cllr Gavin Edwards attended both Walworth community council housing themed meetings, in the first instance to present the scope and nature of the housing review being undertaken. Cllr Edwards second visit involved thanking residents for their contributions as they provided very useful background information, which **informed the subsequent work of the sub-committee**. Most usefully of all was the results from the electronic voting exercise, which were included the Review of Key Performance Indicators in the Housing Repairs Services report.

The outcomes

Primarily the main aim of the meeting was to raise awareness how to effectively use the Councils' housing repairs service and to encourage residents to take part in the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee review this resulted in the following outcomes:

- **Raising awareness** - residents welcomed the opportunity to hear more about the role of the scrutiny sub-committee and how they could influence decision-making via the review process
- **Influencing decision-making** - this was the first time that Walworth community council held an interactive voting session and produced additional comment sheet. More than 60 residents took part in the voting and the results informed the future work the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee.

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee will review the recommendation in 2011 and feedback to the Community Council.

- **Access to Members and officers** - residents welcomed the opportunity to share their experience with ward councillors, Cllr Garvin Edwards, Cllr Ian Wingfield and officers the Housing Repairs and Call Centre team.
- **Information sharing** - there were a number of stalls, which provided information on a range of housing issues.
- **TRA representatives** – there has been a sustained increase in the number of TRA representative attending cc meetings. Feedback has been positive. Representatives find the meetings informative.



Case Study – Peckham Community Council

Health and Well-Being theme 2010 – 11



Peckham

Background

During the last year Peckham Community Council has focused on health and well-being due to the fact that the Peckham physical activity needs assessment had outlined that **the area has low levels of physical activity and a high prevalence of associated diseases** including high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Peckham also has high rates of childhood obesity.

The Meeting

The agenda kicked off in the September with a **healthy walk** from Wickway community centre to the meeting venue, led by a local walk leader. The findings and recommendations from the study were presented at the meeting demonstrating a need for measures to encourage and support local people to take up more low cost exercise such as walking, swimming, gym, dance and cycling. In the ensuing discussion residents and Councillors provided various suggestions as to how local people can be helped to increase their engagement in physical activity.

In view of the recommendations from the report the next meeting focused on cycling in order to promote more physical activity. Participants brought their rusty bikes for an **MOT by a local bike shop**. The sustainable transport team gave a presentation about the Barclays Cycle Hire scheme and cycling in London. Southwark Living Streets also gave a talk aimed at generating ideas about how to improve cycling and walking conditions in the area with a view towards informing the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan.

The December meeting concentrated on the nutritional aspects of health, starting with a **healthy cooking demonstration** giving out recipes for cheap healthy meals for the festivities. The meeting also hosted a **health fair** where attendees got a blood pressure check from a local surgery and health related information stalls provided by statutory and community agencies. Presentations were given about the childhood obesity problem in the area highlighting the need for increased access to green spaces, more active travel, healthier school food and closer work with families. The community nutritionist also gave a presentation with information about their school programme and the importance of a healthy, balanced diet.

The Outcomes

Having a breast screening initiative presentation at the meeting resulted not only in local people getting detailed information about the process but also in Better Days Cancer Care linking up with several local organisations including a church and an HIV awareness group which would then enable them to conduct more grass roots awareness sessions. A *“Breast cancer in the black community”* themed stall was furthermore held at Kings College Hospital as part of Women’s Day in March 2011 thereby reaching even more women.

By putting the physical activity issue high on the agenda the community council acted as one of the catalysts for **further local related work**. The public health and leisure teams report that **uptake for physical activity** in the SE15 area for that quarter was the highest in the borough due to the increased focus on the theme, which effort the community council was an important part of. Another result of this multi-faceted campaign to increase physical activity in the area was that local residents also came forward to be **trained as walk leaders**, something which was lacking before.

The cycling theme also invited interest from a local TRA who wanted to encourage cycling uptake on their estate. The Sustainable transport team worked with the estate and a cycle ride was arranged for Sunday 29 May 2011. People met at the Local Barclays Cycle Hire docking point on at the Bricklayers Arms. Southwark Council's transport department arranged for a ride leader, 2 cycle training instructors, availability of hire bikes and a route using quiet local roads in the area. 8 residents were able to try out the hire bikes, 2 participants had never learnt to cycle so it was decided that a park environment might be better suited for these first steps. In the end 5 people went on a ride which included the Community Council Chair. Issues brought up during the Community council discussions about the school based nutritional work were also used to encourage an up skilling of school nurses to engage better with parents via schools and to have conversations about weight.

Following on from the ride, the Sumner residents started working with a cycle trainer and were looking to apply for the London Cycle Campaign community fund but thought it best to wait until the estate had appropriate cycle storage provision and improved cycling proficiency of the residents. At the moment **20 residents**, mainly, but not all, women, **will be taking cycling lessons, with half of them being absolute beginners**. Links have also been made with the London Cycling Campaign for them to take part in the Age well cycling project. The Livesey Safer Neighbourhoods team will be providing the projects with unclaimed bikes. Work will also be done with the Friends of Burgess Park projects around increasing walking down the Surrey Canal and working with some of the trained walk leaders to conduct walks.



Case Study - Bermondsey Community Council

Employment and Training Fair themed meeting – September 2010



Background

In 2007, Southwark was the second most deprived borough in London for employment deprivation. The employment rate is 66.6%, behind London (69.8%) and Great Britain (74.4%) and 4.7% of working age population in Southwark are on benefits.

A number of Community Council attendees had voiced concerns over the recession impacting on unemployment, which remains high and disproportionately affects young people and over 40's. It was suggested that the community council could help to **maximise the benefits of the large scale redevelopment** projects that are in the area, and which should be increasingly offering employment opportunities to local people. In response to this demand a **Jobs and Training** Fair was planned for the September 2010 community council meeting.

The Meeting

In the prevailing economic climate, the number of real jobs available was likely to be restricted. From discussions with various stakeholders, it was recognised that many individuals lack the appropriate skills, and/or the self-confidence to compete effectively in the highly competitive job market.

Extensive research, attending meetings and events, and letter and email communications, ensured that a wide range of agencies were invited to attend the meeting, as well as local employers with jobs to be filled.

Appendix 1

These included groups that offer training in particular disciplines, volunteering opportunities to build confidence and support for CV writing, presentation, interview skills and related job seeking initiatives.

The addition of a wide range of display and information stands guaranteed diversity of displays which created a busy and productive environment in the Harris Academy School hall venue and the promise of real jobs for local people ensured an excellent turnout for this meeting with **well over ninety people attending**.

The room was set up with a number of “stalls” in the manner of most fairs, which allowed people to speak freely with the various stallholders with a measure of comfort and privacy. Comments on the night were extremely favourable, both from members of the community and also from the various agencies and employers represented. The groups attending were very impressed with the event, as the theme was almost unique in appealing to both young and older residents, and agreed that they would happily repeat the exercise again in the future.

The outcomes

Eight jobs were filled on the night, to the great delight of all concerned, including a 20 yr old youngster who was enrolled into an apprenticeship and a man in his early 60's who was offered a job that suited his skills and experience. Staff from St Giles Trust were also pleased that **volunteers signed up on the night** and several others indicated that they would consider doing so in future.

Many attendees were unaware of the role, or in fact, existence of community councils, and the demographic overview of the meeting suggested that the Jobs and Training Fair was **attracting a group who wouldn't normally attend CC meetings**. The employers and representatives from some of the agencies were also pleasantly surprised at the ways community councils can function in the wider arena. The event was therefore successful in widening awareness and understanding of community councils.

There have been several requests to repeat the Jobs and Training Fair theme, ideally on a Saturday, and also to replicate it in the Rotherhithe CC area.

Community council	When?	Themed meeting?	Headcount	Average (mean)
Bermondsey	24 January 2010	Green Bermondsey	42	66
	03 March 2010	Annual review	67	
	23 June 2010	Forward planning	46	
	27 September 2010	employment and training	80	
	09 November 2010	History of Bermondsey	95	
	Dec-10	Older persons agenda	42	
Borough & Bankside	10 January 2010		60	58
	01 March 2010		62	
	03-May-10		49	
	01 June 2010	Setting the agenda	45	
	20 July 2010	Safe in the City	45	
	05 October 2010	Future of Borough High Street	102	
	09 November 2010		54	
	09 December 2010	Christmas special	50	
Camberwell	02 February 2010		55	66
	03 May 2010		72	
	24 June 2010	Meet your Councillors	55	
	22 September 2010	Older people	65	
	04 November 2010	Young people	83	
	07 December 2010	Regeneration and cross-border working	68	
Dulwich				57
	03 February 2010		54	
	25 March 2010		61	
	22 June 2010	Forward planning	55	
	16 September 2010	Traffic and transport	60	
	10 November 2010	LBS spending challenge	89	
	13 December 2010	Health Service	22	
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	08-Feb		65	54
	16-Mar-10		47	
	21 June 2010	Meet your Councillors	55	
	05 October 2010	Traffic and transport	58	
	08 November 2010	Budget Consultation	46	
	08 December 2010		39	
Peckham	03-Feb-10		43	50
	28-Mar-10		38	

Community council	When?	Themed meeting?	Headcount	Average (mean)
	22 June 2010	Meet your Councillors	49	
	20 September 2010	Physical activity	50	
	03 November 2010	Cycling	45	
	07 December 2010	Health and Well being	72	
Rotherhithe	21-Jan-10	Intergenerational	31	62
	01-Mar-10	Recycling	53	
	23 June 2010	Forward planning	41	
	07 October 2010	future of Albion Street	71	
	08 November 2010	Thames Water - KSG	101	
	08 December 2010	Intergenerational	43	
Walworth	05 February 2010		60	58
	16 March 2010		35	
	21 June 2010	Setting the agenda	69	
	06 October 2010	Young people	85	
	13 December 2010	Community safety	43	

Community Council Historical Attendance Data (2006-2011)

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

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
consulting with community council. <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. 9.1	Classification: Open	Date: 3 August 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission
Report title:		Clarification on community council budgets	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director Communities Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the responses to the issues raised on the community council budget at the meeting of the Democracy Commission on 8 July 2011.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Democracy Commission was provided with budgetary information on the expenditure on Community Councils for 2011/12 in the Information pack presented to members at the meeting of the commission held on 21st April 2011.
3. Further information on Community Council budgets was also provided at the closed session of the commission meeting held on 8th July 2011 that considered staffing matters.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. At the meeting of the Democracy Commission held on 8 July 2011 members asked for clarification on 3 issues relating to the costs of providing Community Councils. These were:
 - The total projected expenditure for the neighbourhoods team due to pensions adjustments and whether this meant a saving could already be identified.
 - The outturn figure for 2010/2011.
 - The Service Level Agreement Charges to Community Councils.

Pension Adjustments

5. These represent accounting adjustments made as a result of the valuation of the council pensions scheme and are applied across the council. These elements of the budget are centrally controlled through the Finance & Resources Department and are not available to contribute to the savings that the commission is considering.

Outturn figure for 2010/2011

6. In 2010/2011 the Neighbourhoods and Constitutional team budgets were underspent by a total of £17,967.54. The underspend is not available for use in

2011/2012 and is explained by the impact that the election had on the schedule of meetings meaning that one cycle of community council meetings was missed. Officers are currently projecting that these budgets will not underspend in 2011/2012.

Service Level Agreements

7. These charges relate to accounting adjustments that allocate corporate costs to each service area across the council. They relate to the costs of provision of IT for staff working with Community Councils under the corporate contract and costs relating to central support services like finance, communications and so on.
8. As with the pension adjustments these costs are centrally controlled and are therefore not available to the Commission to contribute to the savings target and beyond the scope of the Democracy Commission review.

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 July 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	Yes	No
Cabinet Member	Yes/No	Yes/No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	25 July 2011	

Examples of Community Council meeting costs per attendee

The table below is based on the figures contained in the report heard by the council's Democracy Commission on 21 April 2011, as well as other cost information held by the constitutional and neighbourhoods teams. The total cost figures include some items which had to be estimated due to the exact figures not being available - these are marked with an asterisk (*). Some of the figures may also relate to services which the council must provide, such as the provision of BSL-signers, which increased the price per meeting when they were required.

The figures do not reflect an absolute cost of the meeting as staff costs have not been included.

In the course of analysing the figures, it became clear that the meetings broadly fall into the following categories relating to attendance and cost:

- attendance - meetings with low attendance (under 50), meetings with high attendance (over 50)
- cost - low cost (less than £1,400), medium cost (between £1,400 and £1,700), high cost (over £1,700)

The table therefore lists the six different types of meeting based on these categories.

- Low cost, low attendance
- Low cost , high attendance
- Medium cost, low attendance
- Medium cost, high attendance
- High cost, low attendance
- High cost, high attendance

Please note that there were lower cost meetings than the ones listed below, but no headcount figures were available for these meetings. They could therefore not be included.

Type of meeting	Description and cost of items involved	Total Cost (approx)	Head count (approx)	Cost per attendee
Low cost Low attendance	Van hire, transport, teas/coffees £270 Printing cost (agendas) £106.50* Venue £200 PA system £512 Publicity (posters/flyers) £192 Catering £48	£1,328.50	39	£34.06
Low cost High attendance	Van hire, transport, teas/coffees £310 Printing costs (agendas) £84*	£1,293	73	£17.71

Type of meeting	Description and cost of items involved	Total Cost (approx)	Head count (approx)	Cost per attendee
	Venue £120 PA system £512 Publicity (posters/flyers) £115 Refreshments £152			
Medium cost Low attendance This category seems to produce the highest per capita cost.	Van hire, transport, teas/coffees £270 Printing costs(agendas) £106.50* Venue £239 PA system £512 Publicity (poster/flyers) £172 Refreshments £152	£1,451.50	30	£48.38
Medium cost	Van hire, transport, £240	£1,521.50	101	£15.06

Type of meeting	Description and cost of items involved	Total Cost (approx)	Head count (approx)	Cost per attendee
High attendance The Thames Water “super sewer” was discussed, which may account for the large interest.	teas/coffees Printing costs £231* (agendas) Venue £160 PA system £512 Publicity £144 Refreshments £234.50			
High cost Low attendance	Van hire, transport, teas/coffees £310 Printing costs £231* (agenda) Venue £160 PA system £512 Publicity £329	£1,760.50	48	£36.68

Type of meeting	Description and cost of items involved	Total Cost (approx)	Head count (approx)	Cost per attendee
	Refreshments £218.50			
High cost High attendance	Van hire, transport, teas/coffees £250 Printing costs (agendas) £84* Venue £410 PA system £512 Publicity (flyers/posters) £565 Refreshments £282	£2,103	83	£25.33

Estimated savings from reduced meetings

In 2011/12 6 main meetings have been scheduled per community council as that is the normal cycle for council meetings, the allocation of dates necessarily includes a deviation from the 6 week cycle to allow for school holidays, party conferences and other committed dates.

The table below sets out the estimated meeting savings if the number of main meetings is reduced. The current meeting level is included in the table and shows the savings proposed from the regulation of the meeting cycle to the normal 6 week cycle in 2011/12. No budget reduction has been made as a result of the change in 2011/12; any money saved this year will be available to support other initiatives on improving engagement in community councils for the current year. This sum is available to contribute to the overall saving sought by the commission.

The figures relate to savings from meeting costs only.

Number of main meetings per community council	Total main meetings supported	Level of meeting reduction	Estimated meeting cost saving
6	48	-	£23,234
5	40	28%	£46,468
4	32	42%	£69,703

Comments

- Reducing the frequency of meetings would potentially allow a large saving without reducing boundaries, although not to the same level. By way of comparison it is estimated £66,834* of main meeting costs could be saved by reducing from 8 to 5 community council areas
- Executive functions carried out by community councils such as Community Council Fund and traffic management decisions could probably all be taken with a quarterly meeting cycle.
- The effectiveness of some functions may need to be considered in a reduced meeting cycle, for example Cleaner, Greener, Safer.
- Agendas will need to be well managed and some portion of the meetings could be dedicated to particular local issues to ensure the meetings are responsive to local needs
- If a reduced number of meetings were recommended the impact on decisions taken by community councils would need to be considered to ensure time sensitive decisions can be taken in a revised community council model
- There would be some impact on public questions particularly the timescales of written responses at the next meeting. A solution could be to explore action tracking on the website to compensate for this
- SRA chairs are currently paid £8,357. The level may need to be re-considered as a result of any changes to the level of meetings
- The link to community councils and council assembly themes may change

*Note

This is a revised figure from the figure quoted in the boundaries paper considered by the Commission on 26 May 2011 which contained a typographical error. It should

have stated that if the number of Community Council areas were to be reduced to 5 the saving to main meetings would be £66,834 not £96,663 as previously stated. This would make a total meeting cost saving of £121,756 not £152,005 as stated in the report.

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Councillor Mark Glover	1
Councillor Helen Morrissey	1
Councillor Columba Blango	1
Councillor Michael Mitchell	1
Councillor Paul Noblet	1
Councillor Cleo Soanes	1

Also:

Councillor Barrie Hargrove	1
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