



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 18 June 2012 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:	Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair) Councillor Dan Garfield (Vice-Chair) Councillor Toby Eckersley Councillor Gavin Edwards Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE Councillor Tim McNally (Reserve) Councillor Darren Merrill (Reserve) Councillor Paul Noblet Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole Councillor Geoffrey Thornton (Reserve) Councillor Mark Williams
OFFICER SUPPORT:	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny Norman Coombe, Legal Services Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Coyle, David Hubber and David Noakes and from Ms Leticia Ojeda, Parent Governor.

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

- 2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

- 3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012 be agreed as an accurate record.

5. REPORT INTO THE COLLAPSE OF SOUTHERN CROSS CARE HOMES (FINAL REPORT OF HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE)

- 5.1 Councillor Mark Williams, chair of the health & adult social care scrutiny sub-committee, introduced the report.
- 5.2 Members asked whether the review had explored the possibility of requiring care providers to indemnify themselves against financial risk. Councillor Williams responded that this had not been included within the scope of the review but that a recommendation could be added to the report. However, he commented that this would inevitably push up the cost of providing care.
- 5.3 Members were concerned at the indication on page seventeen of the report that the Four Seasons loan of £600 million would mature in September of this year. Councillor Williams highlighted that their accounts had been returned as qualified and that debt repayments were falling behind.
- 5.4 In response to further questions, Councillor Williams confirmed that, as a result of improvements, the council had lifted the embargoes in respect of the care homes in the borough. He also clarified the process for billing and reported that survey returns and the oral update in respect of Tower Bridge Home were positive.
- 5.5 Members asked whether the council had a good relationship with the various tiers of management. Councillor Williams believed that new management at Southern Cross was better and more open. In his view, sharing of best practice was key. Once the report had been considered and commented on by cabinet, the sub-committee aimed to meet with the managers of the three homes.
- 5.6 The committee welcomed the report as an important piece of work.

RESOLVED:

That, with the additional recommendation below, the final scrutiny report be submitted to cabinet for consideration:

“That cabinet be asked to explore the feasibility of requiring indemnification from future care contractors in the event that the provider ceases to operate.”

6. WORK PROGRAMMING

- 6.1 The chair hoped that all three sub-committees would achieve a high quality of

reports in the forthcoming year. She felt that it was important for the committee to maintain an overview of the work of the sub-committees. With the smaller number of sub-committees and the expanded terms of reference it was even more important that work programmes be seen as meaningful and relevant by local residents and take up issues that were of strategic importance to the council.

- 6.2 The chair reported that she had met with the vice-chair to discuss the way forward for developing work plans. Their view was that sub-committees remained best placed for conducting longer term investigative reports while the parent committee was able to focus more successfully on issues that arose at short notice and could be dealt with by brief scrutinies. The chair suggested that sub-committees might be expected to produce a minimum of two reports during the year, to set at least one topic before the summer recess and to revisit the work plan mid-year. It was agreed that members of the committee forward any proposed scrutiny topics for sub-committees to the vice-chair by 1 July.
- 6.3 The chair indicated that a possible item already on the table for discussion at the parent committee was the council's management of allotments. She welcomed any other possible items from members during the course of the year.
- 6.4 Members of the committee reported their experience of cabinet member interviews. It was agreed that the committee and its sub-committees would continue to interview the cabinet member whose portfolio fell within their terms of reference.
- 6.5 The chair proposed that, with the agreement of members, the committee introduce a bi-monthly agenda item in respect of management and monitoring of major contracts. She suggested that the first of these take place at the July meeting and concentrate on the Wates Major Works Contract. Future items might include the development of the new in-house customer contact centre. The chair also indicated that she had asked for an item to the July meeting in respect of food hygiene in schools.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm