



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 17 September 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 David Hubber
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Tim McNally (Reserve)
Councillor David Noakes
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Mark Williams

OFFICER Norman Coombe, Legal Services
SUPPORT: Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Noblet and Leticia Ojeda, Education Representative. Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole.

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 16 July 2012 be agreed as an accurate record.

5. REVIEW OF SERVICES RELATING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN SOUTHWARK - FINAL SCRUTINY REPORT (HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE)

- 5.1 Councillor Gavin Edwards, chair of the housing, environment, transport & community safety scrutiny sub-committee, introduced the sub-committee's final report on the review of services relating to domestic violence and abuse in Southwark.
- 5.2 In answer to questions from members of the committee, Councillor Edwards confirmed that the council tenancy agreement contained clauses relating to domestic violence and allowed the re-housing of one partner as a result of domestic violence. He clarified recommendation 5 as asking the council to look into the possibilities of linking tenancy conditions and attendance at behaviour change programmes.
- 5.3 In answer to further questions, Councillor Edwards explained that the Courts Service had the authority to create a dedicated domestic violence court. He also corrected paragraph 40 of the report to read detection rate rather than conviction rate. Members of the committee highlighted recommendation 2 in respect of establishing a domestic violence court and took the view that the committee might write to the Courts Service in support of this and in addition seek the views of the three Southwark MPs.
- 5.4 Members also referred to table 4 of the report, which set out numbers and sources of referrals to the Solace advocacy and support service, and highlighted the lack of statistics in respect of primary carers and GPs. Councillor Mark Williams, chair of the health, adult social care, communities & citizenship scrutiny sub-committee, indicated that the sub-committee would be happy to look at this aspect and if necessary write out to GPs and the clinical commissioning group. Councillor Williams also commented that table 5, on the number and types of abuse, did not give figures in respect of female genital mutilation.
- 5.5 Members of the committee were concerned at the current response from the housing department (recommendation 9) and that the safety of the victim should be the priority. Councillor Edwards stressed that every case was different and that training was essential across all groups. A member suggested that the groups identified in recommendation 3 should include leaders of local faith groups.
- 5.6 A member highlighted paragraph 15 in respect of mothers and children and wondered about the extent of thinking it had been possible for the sub-committee to do around the effect on the mental well-being of children in a household where domestic violence was taking place. Members of the committee were of the view that this was an area where further work could be undertaken at a later date, perhaps as joint work across sub-committees or perhaps by the overview & scrutiny committee itself. Councillor Williams added that this was also something

that the health, adult social care, communities & citizenship scrutiny sub-committee could raise with South London & Maudsley NHS Trust in relation to changes to psychological therapies services.

- 5.7 Another member queried whether recommendation 13 should remain as he understood that such a scheme already existed. Councillor Edwards stated that he would confirm whether or not this was the case before the report was submitted to cabinet.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee write to the Justices' Clerk and the Chair of Bench for the South Central area, copying in the Honorary Recorder of Southwark, asking if consideration has been given to setting up a dedicated domestic violence court and encouraging this course of action.
2. That the committee also write to the three Southwark MPs asking if they would support the introduction of a dedicated domestic violence court for Southwark.
3. That the final scrutiny report on services relating to domestic violence and abuse in Southwark be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

- 6.1 The chair suggested that, following on from the housing, environment, transport & community safety scrutiny sub-committee's report on services relating to domestic violence and abuse in Southwark, the committee consider a further scrutiny of this issue but taking a broader view of work across departments and external agencies. The scrutiny could encompass aspects relating to housing, children and health.
- 6.2 The chairs of the three sub-committees updated the committee on their work programmes. Councillor Mark Williams reported that the health, adult social care, communities & citizenship would be signing off scoping documents for reviews of public health, dementia and King's Health partners. The sub-committee's meeting the following day would also be receiving updates on psychological therapies services and the clinical commissioning group.
- 6.3 Councillor Gavin Edwards reported that the housing, environment, transport & community safety scrutiny sub-committee had begun a scrutiny of tenants' and residents' association halls, the scope of which would include the provision and use of halls, access, investment and the way halls were run. The sub-committee would also be undertaking a scrutiny of the council's tree strategy.
- 6.4 Councillor David Hubber stated that the education, children's services & leisure scrutiny sub-committee had invited Councillor Claire Hickson to its next meeting to agreed two scrutiny reviews, of bullying and the changes relationship with secondary schools.
- 6.5 The committee discussed its approach to scrutiny of the council's budget.

Members felt that they were happy with the format of previous years but that it would be helpful to have an over-arching theme. The chair suggested that a theme for the budget interviews could be that of value for money for Southwark residents.

- 6.6 The committee also considered the contracts on which it would like to receive updates. Members suggested that these include works on the Four Squares Estate, the housing repairs and maintenance contract in the South of the borough and the call-centre. At a later date it would also be useful to receive and update on the performance of the in-house contractor in respect of housing repairs and maintenance in the North of the borough.
- 6.7 The committee noted that its next meeting would include a briefing on risk management of major regeneration projects. Members suggested that this focus on the Elephant & Castle, risks in contract delivery and risks to affordable housing. As a separate issue, a member asked for a brief update on progress in respect of the Wooddene site.

RESOLVED:

1. That as a preliminary to a further scrutiny of domestic violence and abuse in March 2013, the strategic director of housing & community services be asked to provide information over the past three years of the numbers of tenants evicted as a result of domestic violence and the extent of re-housing of victims.
2. That, as in previous years, the budget scrutiny include interviews of all cabinet members but with the over-arching theme of value for money for Southwark residents.
3. That the following contract updates be requested:

October - Four Squares Estate and the housing repairs and maintenance contract in the South of the borough

December - the call-centre

2013 - performance of the in-house contractor in respect of housing repairs and maintenance in the North of the borough

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.