



HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 11 September 2012 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Chris Brown
Councillor Michael Bukola
Councillor Tim McNally
Councillor Martin Seaton
John Nosworthy

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

OFFICER Stephen Douglass
SUPPORT: Ian Brinley
Shelley Burke

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 There were no apologies for absence

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

2.1 There were no late items of business.

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 of the sub-committee held on 9 July 2012 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. TRA HALLS & BARS

- 5.1 Ian Ritchie introduced himself as the chair of the tenants hall working party, jointly organised between Tenants and Homeowners Councils. He explained that the working party meets monthly with 21 active members. It aims to regularise how the halls are run and how their costs work.
- 5.2 The halls have evolved from a number of sources – some are small flats, some were purpose built by the council in the 1970-80s and some were inherited from the Greater London Council. The working party had initially concentrated on a condition survey. At its next meeting it would begin to determine priorities for capital spend, focussing initially on health and safety and disability access issues.
- 5.3 The working party had drafted rules for regular and casual use of the halls. These had been circulating for a time in draft form and were close to completion.
- 5.4 Ian Ritchie pointed out that there were some clear areas of joint interest and suggested that the working party and scrutiny should collaborate where possible.
- 5.5 He commented that the resident involvement team is changing and beginning to take a more participatory approach, which he welcomed. The committee should also bear in mind that Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation (SGTO) can offer support build T&RAs strength. A member asked whether he had any concerns about the training and quality of the staff. Ian Ritchie responded the Tenant Fund Management Committee funds two workers who provide support for basic skills such as chairing meetings. SGTO was looking to develop that and introduce more specialised areas such as premises management.
- 5.6 The chair presented a proposal for scrutiny review of tenants halls and bars (presentation published in meeting papers) and members discussed where the committee could add value. Officers confirmed that they are continuing to work on the accuracy of the database.

- 5.7 The scope as presented by the chair was agreed. Members were particularly interested in looking at good practice in governance, alternative models for managing halls and bars (is there scope for a social enterprise?) and as an outcome of improving the accuracy of the data, an assessment of whether any disused halls could potentially be converted into homes.

6. BRIEFING NOTE ON TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Des Waters, Head of Public Realm, briefed the sub-committee on the timetable for consulting on an update tree management strategy. The current strategy had been adopted in December 2010 with a commitment to review and update it, which was now in hand. The tree strategy and the open space strategy were both programmed for decision at the December meeting of the council's cabinet. It was not proposed to make major challenges to the strategy this time, but to gather in comments from stakeholders.
- 6.2 He explained that the council had previously taken a more reactive approach to tree management, often in response to complaints. The 2010 strategy took a more proactive and risk-based approach, which created a more efficient workflow for the contractor. The council spent approximately £1M per annum on tree management and with the current strategy this meant that about 70% was spent on survey and planned work and 30% on reactive work.
- 6.3 The chair asked the head of public realm to talk through the major issues he expected to be raised by the current review. The head of public realm responded that the shift from a reactive to proactive approach had required the tree service to prioritise risk and place a lower priority on the more minor complaints such as trees interfering with TV signals. Trees were only felled when they were found to be dead, dying or causing a danger to people or property.
- 6.4 Councillor McNally commented that residents perceived a net loss

of trees. The management plan seemed to include felling trees but not replacing them. The head of public realm responded that the asset management approach applied as a result of the tree strategy had uncovered more problems that the service had previously been aware of. He explained that the council's commitment was to seek to replace trees wherever they were felled, but resources did not permit this to be guaranteed. There had been a lot of fresh planting in recent years using funding from a variety of sources, and the council needed to monitor this and consider the impact these trees would have on their locations in 20-30 years.

- 6.5 Councillor Brown asked how the consultation meetings would work. Des Waters explained that officers would go through key highlights of the current strategy – focussing on areas such as the felling policy and the tree replacement programme. The meetings would be announced on the council's website and advertised to ward councillors, friends groups and other stakeholders. There would also be a questionnaire running on the website covering the same issues.
- 6.6 Councillor Seaton asked how many trees were in the borough and their asset value. Des Waters responded that there were around 90,000 trees in Southwark and of these around 57,000 were owned by the council. The CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) formula was the commonly used method for assessing the value of trees. This had last been calculated in 2010 and provided a value of £440M.
- 6.7 Councillor Neale asked what sorts of complaints were typically made about trees. He was interested in putting forward positive suggestions – for example could local communities adopt tree pits and would the council be able to recognise such pits and not interfere with them. He was also keen to know which trees were recommended for urban environments. The head of public realm said that the tree strategy provided an index of all the trees and mapped where they were. The policy was “the right tree in the right place”, i.e. native and appropriate to the setting. In terms of complaints, insurance complaints had been going down. There were regular complaints about loss of light, interference with TV signal, obstruction of views, leaves blocking gutters, sticky pavements from tree sap. Most of these complaints were low priority.

7. QUARTERLY BREAKDOWN ON NUMBERS ON HOUSING WAITING LIST

- 7.1 The committee requested a more detailed analysis of waiting list data for the next quarterly update (due in January 2013)

8. WORK PROGRAMME

8.1

9. TRA HALLS AND BARS

9.1

Meeting ended at 8.35 pm