

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Monday 26 April 2021

6.30 pm

Online/Virtual. Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting. Please contact FitzroyAntonio.williams@southwark.gov.uk for a link to the meeting.

Membership

Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Damian O'Brien (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Hamish McCallum
Councillor Radha Burgess
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle MBE
Councillor Paul Fleming
Councillor Jon Hartley
Bassey (Co-opted member)

Reserves

Councillor Anood Al-Samerai
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Victoria Olisa
Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Andy Simmons
Councillor Bill Williams

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Access

The council is committed to making its meetings accessible. Further details on translation, provision of signers etc for this meeting are on the council's web site: www.southwark.gov.uk or please contact the person below.

Contact

Everton Roberts on 020 7525 7221 or email: everton.roberts@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 18 April 2021



PRINTED ON
RECYCLED PAPER

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Monday 26 April 2021
6.30 pm

Online/Virtual. Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting. Please contact FitzroyAntonio.williams@southwark.gov.uk for a link to the meeting.

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
	PART A - OPEN BUSINESS	
1.	APOLOGIES	
	To receive any apologies for absence.	
	MEMBERSHIP	
	To note that Bassey has been nominated as the Southwark Tenant Management Organisation Committee representative on the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission.	
2.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT	
	In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.	
3.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS	
	Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.	
4.	MINUTES	1 - 4
	To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021.	

Item No.	Title	Page No.
5.	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COMMUNAL AREAS AND RESIDENT EXPERIENCE ON SOUTHWARK ESTATES (DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS)	5 - 6
	To consider draft recommendations in relation to the scrutiny review of communal areas and resident experience on Southwark Estates.	
6.	PROCESS FOR SCRUTINY COMMISSION SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES	
	To discuss the process for the scrutiny commission's submission to the council consultation in respect of tenant engagement structures to be undertaken by the Council in July 2021.	
7.	WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21 (AND 2021-22)	7 - 11
	To note the work programme as at 26 April 2021 and to consider any suggestions for 2021-22.	
8.	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY HUBS (DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS)	12
	To consider draft recommendations in respect of Community Hubs.	
	DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.	

Date: 26 April 2021



Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission held on Wednesday 10 February 2021 at 6.30 pm (Online virtual meeting).

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Damian O'Brien (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle MBE
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Hamish McCallum

OTHERS PRESENT: Councillor Leo Pollak, Cabinet Member for Housing
Cris Claridge (former co-opted member)
Ina Negoita (former co-opted member)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Everton Roberts, Head of Overview and Scrutiny (Acting)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Hamish McCallum.

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

There were no additional late items.

Supplemental agenda No.1 contains the officer report on:

- Building Safety and Cladding

Supplemental agenda No.2 contains:

- Minutes – 1 December 2020

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 1 December 2020 and 28 January 2021 be approved as correct records.

5. BUILDING SAFETY AND CLADDING

Councillor Leo Pollak, Cabinet Member for Housing provided the commission with a brief overview of the current position in respect of building safety and cladding in the borough. Councillor Pollak highlighted the following:

The council has responsibility for 55,000 homes, across 260 council estates (over 2500 blocks). Health and safety of residents was of paramount importance in respect of building safety and fire safety. Since the Grenfell fire, the council has undertaken fire risk assessments (FRA) of all the council blocks, and had adapted the requirements of the FRAs to the different circumstances of the blocks.

Since the passing of the Government Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill, the council has appointed a person to take on the responsibilities of the council's corporate liabilities in relation to building and fire safety for the council stock. There was also a plan in place to start recruiting a set of building safety managers who have operational responsibility for a set of blocks.

In respect of EWS1 inspections, the council had made the choice to bring in a qualified engineers who have already started doing detailed inspections on a handful of blocks as part of an initial pilot. Full inspections were also being undertaken of all high rise blocks, starting with a desktop analysis which was then to be followed up with a detailed inspection where necessary. It was hoped that the inspections would be completed by the end of March and at that point the council would have a much fuller picture.

The council had set up a Building Safety Board, with a building safety programme which will form the basis for inspecting, monitoring and enforcing on private sector stock as well. The monitoring of housing association stock fell to the Department of MHCLG.

The asset management strategy refresh was to be considered by cabinet in June 2021 and there would be a much stronger risk based analysis about which estates and blocks get sequenced for the purpose of major work cycles in the borough.

The council was close to approving a budget for buybacks of former right to buy homes along with parameters of what the council would pay to bring a home back into use for homeless families or general needs council housing.

The commission also heard from Dave Hodgson, Director of Asset Management.

Dave explained that once a FRA had been undertaken, that would drive next actions. The council had a very clear understanding of the council's high rise blocks, there were none with ACM cladding, but there were blocks with other types of cladding. Whilst the general focus was on ACM cladding, the council was focussing on all types of cladding. The council was aware of what was on the different blocks and no immediate problems had been identified.

Correspondence from the Ledbury Action Group in respect of fire risk assessment ratings of Southwark housing blocks was raised at the meeting. The correspondence made a comparison between FRAs undertaken 18 months ago compared to current date. The correspondence suggested that overall there had been no improvement in ratings and in some cases ratings had gone down.

Dave Hodgson explained that fire risk assessors take into account lifestyle factors, not just the building fabric of a block when carrying out a risk assessment. Rubbish on balconies, blocked bin chutes or a live repair case may have impacted on the outcome at the point of inspection. The risk assessment only reflected a snapshot in time, and reflected the position at the time of the inspection.

Desmond Vincent further explained that where a fire risk assessment identified physical changes needing to be carried out to a building because of a highlighted fire risk then required actions would be followed up, but there were also management issues such as residents leaving rubbish, this would be communicated to the estate services to ensure that monitoring is undertaken and issue addressed, similarly communication with housing management would be communicated with, if there is a particular risk around a resident and anti-social behaviour rendering the building at risk.

Officers explained that they were unable to comment on the detail of the correspondence circulated by Ledbury, as the information had only just been brought to their attention, but agreed to go away and look at the information presented.

Dave highlighted some of the challenges that existed in respect of the completion and signing off of the EWS1 forms. It was explained that fire safety engineers who can sign off EWS1 forms can command high fees due to the limited number that exist that are qualified to sign off the forms. It was not practical to train fire safety engineers in house as it would be difficult to retain them due to the level of demand and the council was not in a position to compete with private sector in terms of wages. It also took several years to become a qualified fire safety engineers.

The EWS1 form had two parts to it and only part two of the form that required a fire safety engineer sign off. Part 1 could be signed off by a number of council officers. The council's approach was therefore to support leaseholders by identifying those properties that did not require an EWS1 form, those which only required Part 1 to be completed and those which required both parts and to advise leaseholders accordingly. If Part 2 was not required then leaseholders could approach, any chartered building company for completion of Part 1. A complicating factor was that mortgage lenders were requiring the completion of the whole form even where Part 2 was not required by legislative guidance.

The council was restricted in what it could help leaseholders with as survey costs when required were at present exceptionally high with bills of up to £20,000. If a leaseholder arranged to have one done, other leaseholders could benefit without contributing, it was therefore not reasonable to expect a single leaseholder to foot the bill. It was therefore a quite complex situation which officers were trying to work through.

A question was asked by a member of the public in respect of where tenants can go to get information on progress in connection with action arising from Fire Risk Assessments.

It was explained that the council had been considering how it could better communicate with residents on this issue, currently, Fire Risk Assessments for council owned buildings over 18 meters was published on the council website. Information relating to buildings below that level were available on request via a generic email address.

It was noted that the EWS1 form was only valid for 5 years.

It was requested that the commission receive a progress update on the buyback of Right to Buy properties.

It was suggested that the commission receive update/ written response from the Building Safety Programme Delivery Board. It was recommended up that this be picked up as part of next year's work programme. Councillor Pollak agreed to take away the issue of transparency of the Board, he also informed the meeting that he was due to agree an individual decision making report in respect of buy backs of right to buy properties.

RESOLVED

That the Building Safety Programme Delivery Board be requested to periodically report back to the commission on its work.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

The chair reported that he would be bringing forward some recommendations to the next meeting on the areas the commission have been looking at as part of their scrutiny reviews.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as at 10 February 2021 be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.40pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Preliminary draft recommendations - Estate cleaning services and anti-social behaviour on Southwark Estates

Recommendation 1: The Housing and Modernisation Department (H&M) is the client department for the estate cleaning and estates grounds maintenance services. A service level agreement provides the standards for performance management, including KPIs. The service is entirely council run. Recent experience in the housing repairs service has shown us that internal client/provider models are not always the best way of managing services and driving up performance. In fact, these artificial client/provider models can create inefficiency and unclear lines of management responsibility. Unifying services can improve communication and provide a more clearly understood management structure. The Cabinet should ask for a review to be carried out of this model, comparing it with possible alternatives, and then decide if these arrangements should be changed for the estate cleaning service.

Recommendation 2: Our estate cleaning staff are not as well supported by council IT as they might be. Staff are not provided with council smart phones and have no access to data which would help them to see where cleaning activities might be focussed. They also do not have easy access to online tools to report issues they see during their work, such as fly-tipping. A review of the IT support for estate cleaning staff should be carried out, and additional support put in place where appropriate.

Recommendation 3: Adequate resources are in place to respond to urgent cleaning issues on estates, but widely understood and easy to use routes to report issues to the council are not. The council should develop an online tool for housing estate residents to use which enables them to report issues quickly and easily.

Recommendation 4: Key performance indicators in estate cleaning are a concern for the commission. Over a period of years, KPIs show almost 100% compliance with acceptable standards. KPIs routinely show very high levels of performance, even on estates that are not well-cleaned. KPIs are not accurately reflecting the reality experienced by residents of estates and they are not driving service improvement. Two actions should be put in place to help remedy this:

- a) There should be a complete review of KPIs currently being used as part of the service level agreement and only KPIs that can be used to drive service improvements should be continued.
- b) Residents should be given a direct role in assessing the quality of cleaning on their estate. Monthly online surveys should be sent to all residents on an estate, so that they can quickly and easily give their feedback.

Recommendation 5: Many incidents of anti-social behaviour on Southwark estates are the result of individuals suffering mental health problems or crises. The council does a good job of linking up medical support or alcohol and drug abuse support for those individuals through the MARAC process. However, other sources of support are equally important. For example, employment and training support services for those

wishing to restart or change their working life. The Cabinet should review support arrangements to ensure a full range of support is being offered in these circumstances.

Recommendation 6: Officers described challenges during each new lockdown, created by a surge in domestic violence. People being isolated in a property with an abuser create a much higher risk of abuse. There have been significant increases in demand for domestic violence support services, and officers trained to deal with these situations. Cabinet should put in place protocols and plans to ensure that any future surges created by further lockdowns, mean the council is always able to match the surge in demand with additional resources. Similar arrangements should be considered to support those who become the victims of 'Cuckooing' (vulnerable individuals having their homes taken over by organised criminals). This is also an issue which has increased during lockdowns.

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 April 2021	Meeting Name: Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission
Report title:		Work Programme 2020-21 (2021-22)	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		N/a	
From:		Head of Scrutiny	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission note the work programme as at 26 April 2021 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission consider the addition of new items or allocation of previously identified items to specific meeting dates of the commission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The general terms of reference of the scrutiny commissions are set out in the council's constitution (overview and scrutiny procedure rules - paragraph 5). The constitution states that:

Within their terms of reference, all scrutiny committees/commissions will:

- a) review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council's functions
- b) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the cabinet and council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time in areas covered by its terms of reference
- c) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas
- d) question members of the cabinet and officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects and about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area
- e) assist council assembly and the cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues
- f) make reports and recommendations to the cabinet and or council assembly arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process
- g) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants

- h) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working
 - i) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance
 - j) conduct research and consultation on the analysis of policy issues and possible options
 - k) question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)
 - l) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the scrutiny process and in the development of policy options
 - m) conclude inquiries promptly and normally within six months
4. The work programme document lists those items which have been or are to be considered in line with the committee's terms of reference.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The Housing service areas that fall within the scope of the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission are:
- Resident Services (which includes area management, strategy and business support, strategic business and support housing services).
 - Customer Experience Division (which includes the Contact Centre; Customer Resolution and Specialist Services, My Southwark Home Owners and the Housing Solutions Services).
 - Asset Management Division (which includes New Homes; Investment, Repairs & Maintenance and Engineering).
6. As of 16 September the commission also now has within in its remit the area of community engagement.
7. The cabinet portfolio elements relating to this commission are listed below:

Housing (Councillor Stephanie Cryan)

- Housing Strategy
- New council homes
- Housing allocations and lettings
- Council housing asset management strategy and investment programmes
- Housing repairs and major works
- Homeowners services
- Private rented housing
- Empty homes and under occupation
- Short term-lets
- Relationship with housing associations

Leisure, Environment and Roads - Councillor Catherine Rose (Housing related portfolio areas)

- Estate cleaning

Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods – Councillor Alice Macdonald (Community related portfolio areas)

- Community engagement, participation and development
- Community and tenants and residents halls and centres
- Faith communities

Social Support and Homelessness – Councillor Helen Dennis

- Establishing a Southwark Community Support Alliance (building on the success of the community hub)
- Homelessness services

8. Set out in Appendix 1 (Work Programme) are the issues the housing scrutiny commission is due to consider in the 2020-21 municipal year.
9. The work programme is a standing item on the housing scrutiny commission agenda and enables the commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission	Southwark Council Website	Everton Roberts 020 7525 7221
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ie/ListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=551		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Work Programme 2020-21

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny	
Report Author	Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 April 2021	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team	18 April 2021	

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2020-21

Item	Meeting date					Commentary
	14 Oct 2020	1 Dec 2020	28 Jan 2021	10 Feb 2021	26 Apr 2021	
Items for future consideration – either allocated (✓) or to be allocated.						
Scrutiny Review of Community Hubs	✓	-	-	-	✓	
Estate communal areas (cleaning service, noise response and ASB)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	
Affordable Housing Delivery	-	✓	-	-	-	
Empty Homes	-	-	✓	-	-	
Building Safety and Cladding	-	-	-	✓	-	
Tenant Engagement Structures	-	-	✓	-	✓	
Cabinet Member Interviews	-	-	-	-	-	

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Preliminary draft recommendations – Community Hubs

Recommendation 1: It's important the council supports residents to move on from emergency food support, where this is possible and appropriate. This means that Southwark Council should be offering advice and support on accessing full entitlement to benefits, employment and training support, housing advice, financial planning advice (paying bills etc.), childcare entitlement and immigration advice. If this support is best delivered in the community hub, then the council needs to be developing and funding this service adequately. If support is best delivered via other means, we need to ensure there is a clear triage and referral process in community hubs. With finances constrained, it is important Southwark is not paying/funding this in two places.

With these points in mind, we recommend that the Cabinet ask officers to review support available to those no longer accessing emergency support to ensure services are funded and there is no duplication.

Recommendation 2: If *new* services become available in community hubs, Southwark may need to reconsider providing similar services centrally. Conversely, if Southwark has a well-run centralised service, we should be building on that success and not duplicating via the community hubs. Many services have performed better and more consistently when centralised. The Commission recommends that the cabinet takes steps to ensure duplication is not occurring as a result of new services being provided from community hubs.

