

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 24 April 2023 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Irina Von Wiese
Councillor Suzanne Abachor
Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Councillor Ellie Cumbo
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Esme Hicks (Reserve)
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Margy Newens
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted Member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Finance

OFFICER SUPPORT: Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny
Allan Wells, Specialist Governance Lawyer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Laura Johnson, Councillor Jason Ochere, Councillor Leo Pollak and Marcin Jagodzinski.

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

There were no additional late items.

The chair informed the committee that supplemental agenda No.1 contained the

late report in relation to Item 7 – Progress update on the Southwark Equality Framework and Equality Audit.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

It was reported that the Minutes would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee for approval.

5. SOUTHWARK COUNCIL CFGS SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT REVIEW AND ACTION PLAN

Ian Parry, Head of Consultancy, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) presented the scrutiny improvement review report findings to the committee.

Following the presentation, discussion was held around the following:

- Call-in procedures
- An opposition chair of the committee
- Earlier and systematic involvement of cabinet members
- Need for release of information earlier (budget setting process given as example)
- Appropriateness of recommendations monitor
- Chairs of OSC moving minutes on their committee with recommendations to council assembly
- The scrutiny review process undertaken with the council
- Resourcing of support for scrutiny

It was indicated that no decisions would be made at this meeting on the adoption of the scrutiny improvement review recommendations.

Councillor Irina von Wiese moved recommendations that the opposition group members wished to be considered as part of the scrutiny improvement review process – detailed below:

1. To remove the requirement for a councillor to be a sitting member of the overview and scrutiny committee to call-in a decision, allowing any three councillors to request a decision to be called-in.
2. To establish a recommendations monitor to be maintained by the scrutiny team in order to track the progress of recommendations.

3. To treat the recommendations of the scrutiny improvement review as a priority area in the council's action plan.
4. For minutes of the overview and scrutiny committee meetings to be submitted to council assembly, to be moved by the chair, and to be scrutinised and agreed by all members.
5. To offer the position of the OSC chair to a member of the main opposition group of the council.

RESOLVED:

1. That the letter from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny arising from the scrutiny improvement review commissioned by the council, appendix 1 of the report be noted.
2. That consideration of actions to take forward arising from the scrutiny improvement review be deferred until the June meeting.

6. UPDATE ON COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE HEALTHWATCH REPORT ON LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

The committee received an update on the council's response to the recommendations made in the Southwark Healthwatch report on the LGBTQ+ Community as set out in the report from the Community Engagement Manager. The committee heard from Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Finance.

Councillor Cryan advised the committee that the work arising from the Healthwatch report was picked up by the CCG and public health, and then Covid 19, impacted on the work as attention was directed to responding to the pandemic. Councillor Cryan highlighted issues contained in the officer report.

Following the cabinet members presentation, discussion was held around the following:

- Consideration of an LGBTQ+ Strategy

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

In accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 1.9(4), Councillor Victor Chamberlain requested that his vote against the foregoing resolution be recorded in the minutes.

7. PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE SOUTHWARK EQUALITY FRAMEWORK AND EQUALITY AUDIT

The committee received a progress update on the Southwark Equality Framework and the Equality Audit as set out in the report from the Director of Communities. The committee heard from Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Finance, Evereth Willis, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities.

Evereth Willis, presented the officer report. Following the presentation of the report, discussion took place around the following:

- Support by the council for LGBTQ+ communities
- Casey Review
- Integrating Socio economic equality into strategy, in light of widening income gap
- Southwark Stands Together
- How the council is dealing with hidden protected characteristics such as sexuality and disability
- Gender critical thought
- Census data – trans and non binary identity

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress update on the Southwark Equality Framework and the Equality Audit be noted.
2. That it be noted that the Equality audit report findings and recommendations contribute to the refresh of Southwark Stands Together and Southwark Equality Framework.
3. That the audit report and recommendations be presented to a future OSC meeting, and that OSC be invited to comment on the findings and engage in the refresh of Southwark Stands Together and the Southwark Equality Framework by way of pre-decision scrutiny.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as at 24 April 2023 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.43pm

CHAIR:

DATED: