

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4 July 2023 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Irina Von Wiese (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Suzanne Abachor
Councillor Ellie Cumbo
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Laura Johnson
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Jane Salmon (Reserve)
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted Member)
Marcin Jagodzinski (Co-opted Member)

OFFICER Sarah Feasey, Deputy Head of Law (Communities)
SUPPORT: Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Victor Chamberlain, Sunny Lambe, Bethan Roberts, Chloe Tomlinson, and Jonathan Clay (co-opted member).

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

There were no additional late items.

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 5 December 2022, 11 January 2023, 24 January 2023, 1 March 2023, 24 April 2023 and 20 May 2023 be approved as correct records.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMMES 2023-24

The chair and vice-chair of overview and scrutiny committee and the commission chairs went through the proposed initial work programme areas for overview and scrutiny committee and the scrutiny commissions. Other committee members also provided comment on the proposed work programmes. Following discussion the committee agreed the initial work programmes for overview and scrutiny committee and the commissions for the 2023-24 year.

RESOLVED:

That the initial overview and scrutiny committee and scrutiny commission work programmes for 2023-24 be as follows:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Standing items

- Council Delivery Plan Performance Monitoring
- Climate Emergency Performance Monitoring
- Budget Setting Process 2024-25
- Annual Workforce Strategy Report

Pre-decision scrutiny

- Southwark Stands Together Refresh and Southwark Equality Framework

Scrutiny reviews and mini review topics

- Abbeyfield Estate – A Way Forward (Maydew House) Scrutiny review to establish procedures that will prevent a similar situation occurring in the future.
- Regeneration Scrutiny – with a focus on individual schemes
- Improving Customer Services for Council Housing Repairs
- Review of the Mayor's Budget and Operations of the Mayor's Office

- Exploration of how the council could use the voluntary sector as a commissioned service to deliver the work that the council has committed to around:
 - Elections Act – Increase in communication costs and workload of Electoral Services
 - Managing the constitutional and governance changes arising from emerging and new legislation e.g. Health & Social Care Act
- Increase in Bulky Waste Charges – update on impact
- Bids to alleviate excessive inflationary pressures in the Voluntary Sector
- Capital Budget Refresh
- Temporary Accommodation Budget (including housing allocation and use of temporary accommodation)
- Formal council complaints and legal action (how many received/resolved, repeat problems, and cost of legal settlements)
- Contract Management (assessing value, quality and efficiency, under-performing contractors)
- In house Leisure Service (management of transition, quality of day to day management, overall financial health of service)
- Mooring Fees (to be factored into budget scrutiny process)

EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION

- Traders and markets (how council can support markets and local businesses by cutting costs)
- Community Wealth Building
- School amalgamations and closures in Southwark
- Planning processes and policies for Southwark businesses to help boost the local economy sector in Southwark
- Southwark Stands Together – role and successes (schools perspective)
- Update on Children’s Safeguarding Partnership in Southwark

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Biodiversity:

- Kerb side strategy
- Trees strategy
- Biodiversity in parks and green spaces
- Community gardening and urban food production
- Council use of herbicides and pesticides

Sustainable Freight Review (continuation from previous years scrutiny review)

- Air Quality (from a mitigation perspective)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

- Air Quality (from a health perspective)
- Access to public toilets
- Adult Safeguarding
- Access to Dental Care
- Blue Badge Application Process
- Drug and Alcohol
- Pain Clinic Management

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMISSION

- New Allocations and Lettings Scheme
- Temporary Accommodation
- Compensation scheme for heating outages
- New Council Homes
- The Casey Review
- Interviews with the Borough Police and Fire Commanders

The chair indicated that the community engagement element of the environment and community engagement scrutiny commission would be transferring to the housing and community safety scrutiny commission. This would be ratified at the next overview and scrutiny committee meeting.

6. SOUTHWARK COUNCIL CFGS SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT REVIEW AND ACTION PLAN

The chair informed the meeting that it was not intended for the committee to consider the majority of the recommendations at this meeting. This was due to further member discussions to be arranged with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) in relation to the scrutiny improvement review.

RESOLVED:

1. That the guidance issued by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny for English local authorities on the use of call-in be noted.
2. That recommendation 9 of the CfGS report 'Review the call-in procedure based on benchmarking and examples of good practice' be approved.

7. SAFER SOUTHWARK COMMUNITIES - MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL ASSEMBLY AND AGREED BY CABINET

Councillor Ellie Cumbo informed the meeting that the housing and community safety scrutiny commission would be continuing to look at particular findings of the Casey review.

Councillor Cumbo drew attention to the very wide ranging and concerning findings of the review and stressed to the committee that one of the findings was that local authorities did not have sufficient powers to hold the Metropolitan police service to account. She therefore expressed caution on the limits of some of the improvements that the council would wish to see, which could arise only from structural change for which the senior political and police leadership would need to commit to in order to secure change.

RESOLVED:

1. That the motion be noted.
2. That the housing and community safety scrutiny commission initially undertake the work highlighted in the motion as appropriate.
3. That the findings of the commission's review be presented to the overview and scrutiny committee.

The meeting ended at 8.06pm

CHAIR:

DATED: