



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Irina Von Wiese (Vice- Chair)
Councillor Suzanne Abachor
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Councillor Sam Foster
Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Catherine Rose
Councillor Martin Seaton
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member)
Jonathan Clay (Co-opted member)
Marcin Jagodzinski (Co-opted member)

**OTHER
MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

Councillor Stephanie Cryan

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:**

Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Laura Johnson who was substituted by Councillor Sabina Emanuel.

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

There are no additional late items.

The Chair informed the committee that

Circulated on supplemental agenda No.1 is the updated presentation on the Contact Centre Budget pressures from yesterday, 20 January 2025, Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on budget scrutiny.

Circulated on email to the committee is the HRA data from last year as comparison tables to data on slides 3 & 4 of the HRA presentation from yesterday, 20 January 2025, Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on budget scrutiny.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations

4. FORMULATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET ON THE PROPOSED POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2025-26

The committee heard further from Councillor Stephanie Cryan, – Equalities, Democracy and Finance and Tim Jones, Director Corporate Finance resources

The committee discussed the evidence gathered from the preceding day's scrutiny meeting, had regard to comments and advice from the cabinet member equalities, democracy and finance, and the strategic director of finance resources and formulated their recommendations to be submitted to cabinet on the proposed policy and resources strategy.

RESOLVED:

Recommendations relating to the budget scrutiny process

Transformation

1. OSC notes the transformation budget included in this policy and resources strategy for 2025-26 and is of the view that the Council should take advantage of its transformation work to deliver climate change mitigation, for e.g. transitioning towards fully electric vehicles and more sustainable working patterns.
2. OSC reiterates its recommendation from the previous year 2023-24 That the Council further strengthen its work and increase its efforts in bringing vacant commercial properties owned by the Council back in use; and realising its potential in generating income streams. The committee notes with concern despite improvements, too many such properties remain vacant.

Temporary Accommodation

3. OSC notes that the London councils are involved in a broader piece of work over the funding conditions of Homelessness Prevention Grant. OSC recommends that the Council produces an analysis of how the funding conditions of the government's Homelessness Prevention Grant would impact Southwark's Homelessness funding and share its findings with other London councils. This is concurrent to the lobbying of government with the support of the London Councils, advocating for greater flexibility in how the funding is allocated.
4. OSC recommends that the Council continues to lobby central government for rent controls as an option to tackle the homelessness crisis, recognising the true cost of private rental housing in London when compared to other major cities such as Manchester and Liverpool.
5. OSC recommends that in line with Recommendation 4 the Council in its discussions with London Councils highlight the impact of the costs of private rented housing on Temporary Accommodation and the Housing Revenue Account within Southwark.

No Recourse to Public Funds

6. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the Council's recommendation in its presentation on No Recourse to Public Funds with regards to automation; to streamline processes, improve efficiency and reduce errors. The committee also recommends that the council continuously monitor such progress for the upcoming council year.

Adult Social Care

7. OSC recommends that That the Council review all the Equality Impact and Needs Analysis in the budget; to assess the impact on protected characteristics and vulnerable groups because of the budget savings and efficiencies in the first year of the budget 2024-2025; including but not limited to adult social care funding and all fees & charges.
8. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the potential detriment impact to the Council's finances considering the rise in the employer National Insurance Contributions (NIC) which come into effect on 6 April 2025. Furthermore, this committee also notes that the government mitigation funding is insufficient to cover the full additional costs to the council for directly employed staff. Therefore, this committee recommends that the Council lobby the government asking for further mitigation in NIC costs particularly in areas of adult social care.

5. SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION - UPDATE

The committee was briefed by Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny on the Scrutiny Implementation Review covering the following points

- Cabinet Scrutiny Protocol
- Action Plan
- Pre-decision Scrutiny
- Scrutiny Improvement Tracker
- Opportunities for community engagement and collaborative approaches
- Strengthen collaborative relationships between scrutiny, Cabinet and Directors whilst maintaining the independence of scrutiny.

Meeting ended at 9:37 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: