



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 8 October 2025 at 6.30 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Rachel Bentley (Reserve Member)
Councillor Suzanne Abachor
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Councillor Esme Hicks
Councillor Laura Johnson
Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Jason Ochere
Councillor Bethan Roberts
Councillor Martin Seaton

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Natasha Enin
Councillor Stephanie Cryan
Councillor Michael Situ

OFFICER SUPPORT: Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Irina Von-Wiese substituted by Councillor Rachel Bentley, apologies for lateness from Councillor Jason Ochere due to ward surgery and apologies from Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member).

Apologies for absence were also received from Caroline Thwaites, Assistant Director Community Safety & Partnerships due to illness.

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

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. SOUTHWARK COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The committee first received a presentation from Councillor Natasha Enin, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods presenting on Southwark Community Safety – Working Together for a Safer Southwark, supported by officers Stephen Douglass, Director of Stronger Neighbourhoods.

The committee was also introduced to Darren Summers, Integrated Care Board (ICB) (Health), Fire Borough Commander, Daniel Capon and Station Fire Commander for Dockhead, Tom Sharp (London Fire Brigade), Supt. Jim Brockway (Met Police), Emma Bond, Borough Commander Southwark (BCU Commander) Emma Connor (Head of Southwark Probation Delivery Unit) and Aled Richards, Strategic Director, Environment, Sustainability and Leisure (Southwark Council).

The committee was then addressed by Councillor Enin on the following points

- Community Safety is one of the top priorities, Annual Strategic Assessment, resident engagement
- Police Borough Commander, Violence and Vulnerability, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Trust and Confidence in the Police and Safer Sociable Estates
- BBC Panorama show on Charing Cross Police Station and Baroness Casey review; Stop and Search, robberies and Women's safety
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) challenges in council estates- underreported, direct reporting, drug use; Pilot focusing on drug use- Brimington, St Saviours, Nelson and Portland

The committee then received a presentation on Community Safety Partnership (CSP) from Stephen covering the following topic

- Overview and role of CSP, annual strategic assessment (ASA) 2024-2025, new Community Safety Plan 2025-2030.

- Crime stats and data, spikes in reporting of ASB; Serious Violence Strategy; Combating drugs partnership, safeguarding Adults Board, Children's Safeguarding partnership, Health and Wellbeing board
- Southwark 2030; ASA- crime trends and numbers, Overall increase of 15.4% in crime (caveat for this data in CSP supplementary information published in supplementary agenda no.2)
- Crime and ASB hotspots, drug related deaths, VAWG and domestic violence, Women's Safety Survey, Community Voice and Resident Insight Survey, Trust and Confidence in Policing.

The committee then asked questions on the following themes

- VAWG - indecent exposure and stalking; reporting crime ASB vs Crime; Estate Street lighting; CCTV monitoring; Synthetic Opioids
- Facial Recognition popularity, issues and guidelines; Dulwich village and violent crime classification theft and robbery.
- Baroness Casey review and improvements in MET police; Walworth Road MET front counter closing

Emma (Asst. Borough Commander) told the committee that it was shocking and embarrassing to hear about Charing Cross Police Station on the BBC Panorama tv show, trust and confidence in policing has been eroded. The MET commissioner has prioritised the removal of such officers from the police force. Officers from Charing Cross Police station involved in the documented incidents have either been dismissed, suspended or have been removed from the front line, there also been a change in the leadership at Charing Cross.

Furthermore, BCU has been working hard to ensure reporting by police officers of such incidents and there is an internal culture board. The BCU is also working hard with Alcohol and Drugs Action (ADA) to address the issue of supply and use of drugs which is a major challenge.

Supt. Brockway explained to the committee that synthetic opioids are classified by the police as an emerging threat. Intelligence received is being actioned from a neighbourhood perspective. Traditional drugs use is still higher than opioids.

Stephen informed the committee that CCTVs in the borough are recording 24/7 and monitored regularly. CCTV does have a role in evidence gathering for justice purposes, diverting resources to the right place, finding missing persons and robberies for identifying perpetrators. CCTV on estates are recording 24/7, however they are not monitored continuously and are not connected to the public realm CCTV system which is borough wide. Council is encouraging reporting on ASB, VAWG and crime on council estates.

Councillor Enin explained to the committee that the council has a team of Southwark youth advisors working on a peer-to-peer basis, young people are being encouraged to report indecent exposure incidents through their parents and schools. Council is also working with schools on VAWG through the ASA.

Emma (BC) and Supt. Brockway told the committee that facial recognition was deployed a few hours ago in Walworth and six arrests have been made. There haven't been any resident complains on the use of live facial recognition. The police do follow a set of guidelines and processes, prior to this consultation and engagement with residents had been carried out on the use of live facial recognition. Images captured by live facial recognition are discarded within seconds and only images of serious offenders are retained, specifically those that are wanted by the police. Images of outstanding offenders that are wanted by the MET are uploaded in the morning and the images and data are not retained, registered sex offenders that have specific orders are also identified and tracked through facial recognition.

The committee learnt from Supt. Brockway that there is a fine line between robbery and theft, any other use of force other than just the action of snatching a phone is considered a robbery. Furthermore, both types of crime are monitored identifying patterns of behaviour of the offenders. The facial recognition team are very passionate about their specific area of work and its strict guidelines; it has been very successful in making arrests and makes for a very persuasive argument for its use. Facial recognition has been instrumental in arrests of very dangerous individuals who have committed serious crimes which would be very difficult using conventional and other tactical options such as Stop and Search which can be very subjective.

Mayor of London has setup a second analysis of the MET based on the Casey review and is also going to carry out a consultation. MET needs an institutional and cultural change which will take time. The commissioner of the MET is set to attend Question time at the assembly in response to the panorama investigation. London assembly member Marina Ahmed has actively campaigned for vetting of police officers at every level in the MET. Overall crime stats across London have been falling, although there has been increase in certain types of crime.

On Walworth Road, there are budgetary issues, and difficult decisions must be made, some front counters will remain open, some closed or have reduced hours. Engagements and consultations are on-going, and decisions haven't been made yet on closing police front counters. Walworth Road front counter reports around 6 crimes a day and to fill this gap of closing front counters, phone reporting, video reporting and making online statements have been devised.

The committee then asked further questions on the following points

- Rising drug related ASB on estates; illegal electric bikes and fires
- Domestic abuse and substance misuse on estates, working with tenants and TRAs'; Training of council housing officers on identifying domestics abuse and substance misuse.
- CSP and its visibility in the community, MET police and corporate culture, ASB, crime and community safety within the Town Centre Action Plan.

The committee then heard from Daniel and Tom that a public engagement campaign called 'Charge Safe' has been carried out in Borough Market and London Bridge City. This campaign information is also available online; there are issues around people accessing unofficial batteries and chargers which is not up to British safety standards. Some more work has been done in working with delivery drivers and the charge safe campaign. Community engagement event and home visits are also means through which the Fire Brigade educates residents on the illegal chargers and batteries and the fire risk they pose. Dwellings above shops and businesses are at a higher risk due to only one way access and the fire brigade engages with such businesses on fire safety.

A fire safety checker is also available online through which residents and businesses can check whether they need a fire safety check, residents can still ask the fire service for a safety visit even if they don't qualify. A lot of preventive work has been carried out on e-bike conversion kits by working with Deliveroo.

Councillor Enin explained to the committee that the police have made a bid for outside resources to tackle mobile phone thefts on electric bikes in the borough. Two-wheel enabled thefts is a priority for the London MET police. Drug use can often be associated with thefts that feed an individual's drug or alcohol use.

Stephen informed the committee that dual diagnosis in the borough is a funded programme where individual with complex mental and drug related issues are diagnosed. There is also on-going work in drug use with Health, Alcohol & Drug Action (ADA) and Change Grow Live (CGL) is the alcohol and substance use treatment provider.

Councillor Enin explained to the committee that ASB on estates and its responses are communicated to the residents through an engagement process. Training of housing officers on domestic abuse has been approved; resident service officers are aware of the stages through which they can escalate cases quickly through the Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit team (SASBU). Residents can fill in a satisfaction survey at the closure of an ASB case, TRA have been trained to report cases and differences between ASB and Crime. ASB pilots in estates, are being used to understand the drug use in estates and help residents deal with such issues.

Nighttime uniform presence decisions on estates are made with CSP tasking group where operational decisions are made. Reporting of ASB needs to be further encouraged, the council publishes its community safety e-newsletter which provides information on the work being carried in estates. In addition, integrated reporting is being carried out by deploying more resources in hot spots for reporting whilst also working with the police.

The committee heard from Councillor Enin that bringing CSP to this committee meeting was to increase its visibility and of the crime data published through it. The council is also undertaking work to deliver this information in bite-sizes to the community and have conversations with residents on the topics for further discussions. In addition, efforts are also being made to address specific issues in

10 local neighbourhoods on ASB and Crime.

Councillor Enin also suggested a key focus should be on having specific meetings in neighbourhoods with residents including partners to share information on CSP and interact with the community.

Emma (BCU) explained to the committee that the MET is doing work the in its internal culture change, through culture champions; also understanding our issues and the impact on the community. More needs to be done to engage with our residents to increase visibility of the positive actions of the MET like the MET engage initiative online.

The committee learnt from Supt. Jim that through MET engage residents can interact with Police officers on the ward issues. However, there is a need for better communication to residents from the MET.

Councillor Enin explained to the committee that the council is taking a single systemised approach towards the reporting of ASB and Crime, and it's important that Customer Service Officers are well trained on signposting especially where certain issues need to be report to the CSP partners. However, in person interaction with residents is also a key factor.

Stephen informed the committee that the council channels are effective tools for residents to report ASB. The Town Centre Action Plan also has a community safety element which involves a Senior Officer Group working in areas of community safety.

The committee then asked further questions on the following themes

- Impact of CCTV on crime prevention; fear amongst young people and residents on reporting ASB & crime; Women's Safety Survey and high levels of gender-based violence
- Percentages in cases where action has been taken on ASB or drug-use; Petition to reopen Rotherhithe Police Hub; Arrests of the phone smuggling gang and its impact on reduction of phone thefts.
- Impact of Early Release from Custody and its workings

The committee heard from Stephen that he will be looking into more details on high levels of gender-based violence, the data in the presentation includes all types of gender-based violence including domestic abuse. Reporting of ASB is taken seriously by officers and every report is investigated, however there are instances where there isn't any evidence to act on.

The committee learnt from Councillor Enin that the council officers are working with Landlord Services to ascertain how to feedback to residents on ASB complaints closing that feedback loop. Visual Audits and feedback from cleaners are being used to gather evidence of ASB. It is important that the council engages with TRA Chairs who have closer contact with residents. There have also been instances

where the police have arrived at the same time when drug-use perpetrators are present. As a piece of wider engagement ASB and drug-use and the residents making the complaints are called back for liaising. There are initiatives wherein the CSP is working with young people, Youth Crime Stoppers, Fearless but this has not got enough uptake, other boroughs are trialling apps like 'Imabi'. Under the Southwark Violence Reduction Unit there is a consortium called 'My Ends' for young people fearing retribution when reporting crimes.

Stephen informed the committee that officers are working on a piece of communication to residents which details the entire stories of the cases, actions taken and resolutions.

Emma (BCU) explained to the committee that re-opening Rotherhithe Police Hub in a shopping centre is not suitable for various reasons, and she hopes that the arrest and disbanding of the phone smuggling gang in recent news has an impact on areas in Southwark such as Tooley Street.

Emma Connor (Head of Southwark Probation unit) informed the committee that every individual release from prison is subject to stringent license conditions and has a robust Risk Management Plan, this is put together by the probation officer who supervises the individual. It also means conversations with statutory agencies like housing and Dugs & Alcohol Services. In Southwark over the past 6 months there have only been 5-6 individuals released, and they are all with stringent license conditions and a robust Risk Management Plan.

The Chair addressed the committee saying that crime would occur irrespective of the issues in various areas of the respective partner agencies. However, all the partners do have a vested interest in ensuring that the residents of this borough are safe and that law order is upheld. There is a need to rebuild resident trust and confidence in our organisations and especially the police.

6. CHILTON GROVE ESTATE - INFILL AND MAJOR WORKS

The committee first heard from Councillor Stephanie Cryan in her capacity as ward Councillor covering the following points

- Chilton Grove rooftop development and In-fill was not a modular build, and as it was with residents in-situ which caused issues
- Issues with securing Building Control consent; resident project group meetings monthly.
- Contractors did not have expertise and third-party surveyors were approached; Major works could not be done due to Building Control issues being resolved
- Contractors cut down a tree that should not have been cut down, they also used resident car parking spaces and window installations were not installed in the time frame
- COVID delays impact, project initially with New Homes and then passed onto Asset Management when roof top developments and in- fill was not

going ahead

- Arie Miller report highlighted lack of a tendering process for the works; New home and landscaping; Charges for leaseholders should not include communal landscaping and roofing.
- Squatting of empty homes in the estates by criminal gangs involved in drugs and ASB; Block of homes run by Housing Associations at the estate did not have tenancy checks being carried out; Side extensions were considered but the costs were too high and unfair to leaseholders
- £210,000 were allotted for secure entry doors; Major works to be retendered out; Resident representative in the panel; Residents raised issues – resident being recharged for roofs, cladding and landscaping, Flat rates of compensation of £4600 not accounting for level of disruption in each household
- Referring to recommendation 13 going to Cabinet from the Housing Scrutiny commission that the learnings from the Canada Estate be applied to the major works at Chilton Grove Estate; Resident commitment and activity needs to be appreciated.

The committee then heard Councillor Michael Situ, Cabinet Member for Council Homes, Hakeem Osiniake, Strategic Director of Housing, Ryan Collymore, Director of Repairs and Maintenance, Richard Ndudi, Head of Investment and Paul Merter, Interim Design and Delivery Manager on the following topics.

- Apologies to residents living on Chilton Grove Estate facing anxiety and distress; Learnings – ensuring reviews on all major work since 2015, apply to major works strategy, accountable process at Chilton Grove monitoring progress and regular meetings with the Resident Project Group (RPG)
- Contractor left site which led to abandonment of the new rooftop homes development and corner homes extension; Initially leaseholders were not set to pay for rooftop works, cladding, lift replacement and landscaping; £4600 compensation offered to residents because of work not going ahead, residents can raise compensations issues with officers on a case-by-case basis
- Some repairs will be going ahead, roofing, cladding, concrete repairs and landscaping starting January- February 2026. Secure door entry system that is CIL funded to be installed

The committee then asked questions on the following themes

- Communications with all residents; Dealing with ASB until the secure entry doors are installed
- Residents feel a lack of confidence in the council, Leaseholders feel stuck as they cannot rent their flats, last meeting with residents did not go well, some residents told they will have to pay an additional £60k on top of £40k already paid.
- Cultural and systemic issues when dealing with estates such as Devon Mansions, Canada Estate, Kirby Estate, Chilton Grove, Arica Estate and Consort Estate; Contracts awarded without scrutiny and tendering process

Paul explained to the committee that the resident newsletter will be restarted to communicate with all residents and not just the RPG monthly and that it will be circulated to the ward councillors beforehand to check the content. Resident communication, resident involvement and rebuilding trust with residents is a key priority for the housing team.

Hakeem informed the committee that firstly residents were apologies to, at the residents meeting last year. Apologies for the state of estates were also sent to ward councillors and since then the amendments that were promised were made and continue to be made. Initially, the works that were carried out, leaseholders received an estimated bill and the final bill leaseholders received were only on the works that were completed. Leaseholders received refunds for any charges paid for the works that were not completed and a final bill.

However, works are still needed at the estate, and the council has now undertaken standalone refurbishment, and residents will receive a bill for that. All the estates in question and their respective schemes start dates are historical ranging from 2019 Covid era to present time and there is a different way that the housing team is handling these works now.

Furthermore, the housing department has been clear and transparent on the mistakes made, lessons learnt and clearly communicated the next steps taken to address these issues. Recommendations received from this committee, and its commissions have been accepted, and action has been taken.

Councillor Situ told the committee that he himself is reassured that robust systems and processes are in place to ensure delivery of works and no recent issues have been raised in any new development or refurbishment schemes. The council is also working on the Good Landlord Plan which is at the centre of the work the housing team is doing, to regain the confidence of the residents. Councillor Situ also made a commitment to take on every concern raised by residents by being on the front line.

Furthermore, Councillor Situ seeks to gain an in-depth and greater understanding of the processes to hold officers to account and in addition committed to estate walks, repair action days and dropping in to key housing services to observe the work.

Hakeem further explained to committee that the council was already in partnership agreement with Equans the company who were in contract for refurbishment, but Equans dint have expertise in building works. The decision to ask them to do building work has led to these issues.

The committee heard from Councillor Cryan that the resident meeting being referred to, was a meeting held by Open Communities and not the council and it resulted in residents being gathered around a laptop as it was a hybrid meeting. Furthermore, resident meetings should be held in person with the council officers, contractors and residents being present.

The committee then asked further questions on the following topics

- Procurement remaining works £6m-£10m, value for money
- Resident parking used by contractors, scaffolding up for months, rude contractors, massive costs for residents, Thaxted Estate and Damery Estate rooftop developments cancelled
- Review of major works since 2015 and re-opening engagement with residents; Housing department personnel / Cabinet Member change and the loss of the learnings for the council from these estate reviews.

Paul informed the committee that the estimate for the remaining works is £5m, and that a fully compliant procurement process is being followed. The council will only know the costs when the contracts go out to tender and it is expected to have a lot of companies bidding for this contract. The procurement panel will include a resident, and the panel will not only look at the costs but the quality of the submissions and how it relates to the budget. Elements of the work which could lead to duplication like scaffolding which was originally setup for roof works and not carried out will not be recharged to residents and leaseholders again.

Councillor Situ explained to the committee that the council is monitoring the contracts closely and is reassured that new developments are being monitored rigorously.

The committee heard from Hakeem that the council are in conversation with residents of Thaxted and Damery estates to find an acceptable solution to the works being carried out. Furthermore, all the recommendations made by the various committees' haven been actioned and the review of this estate in the published reports clearly outlines the improvements made. The housing team has taken decision making out of the contractors' hands and is being managed by officers to deliver resident needs.

The committee learnt from Councillor Situ that Arica house is on review, and issues arising will be disclosed and lessons will be implemented. All historical major works estates will be reviewed with a focus on operational issues. Accumulating the lessons learnt from all the reviews of the mentioned estates would go a long way in ensuring that these mistakes are not repeated. Hakeem explained to the committee that the previous Cabinet Member for Council Homes, Councillor Sarah King emphasised the importance of having a sustainable process for future development. The housing team has worked to build and do things in a much better way, keeping in line with the Good Landlord Plan.

The Chair then reiterated some of the points made earlier to the committee which could possibly be recommendations

- Resident Communication- all different types of media communications and meetings with residents be utilised e-newsletter, in-person and hybrid.
- Leaseholder Charges- full transparency and ensuring correct charges

- Cabinet Member be asked to gather all the different lessons learnt into a comprehensive document.

Furthermore, the Chair informed the commission that at the last Cabinet meeting, the recommendations on major works had been put forth, the need for a change in the council's culture, a more rigorous strategic oversight in areas of management and politically.

7. CABINET RESPONSE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONSORT ESTATE

The Cabinet response to recommendations was noted by the committee.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee noted the work programme for the 2025-26 year.

Meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: