

<b>Item No.</b> 5	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 26 May 2011	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Democracy Commission – Phase 2
<b>Report title:</b>		Democracy Commission: Overview report for May meeting - Role and Purpose of Community Councils, Neighbourhoods and Boundaries	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Democracy Commission notes the contents of this report which provides an overview of issues to be covered in its May meeting.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. On 25 January 2011, cabinet resolved that the Democracy Commission be tasked with phase 2 of their work, focusing on the role and powers of community councils in the context of budgetary savings. The Democracy Commission will report their progress to council assembly in April 2011 and make their final recommendations in December 2011.
3. At the first meeting of the second phase of the Democracy Commission on Friday 11 March, members agreed a workplan (see information pack) and suggested a slight amendment to the terms of reference.
4. At its second meeting on Thursday 21 April, the Democracy Commission considered the budgetary context of the review of community councils. Members considered the high level options for making savings and officers were tasked with bringing further information more detailed saving estimates to future meetings.
5. Requests from members for further information or investigation around savings options will be incorporated in the following meetings in the Commission's workplan:

<b>Further information request</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>
Meeting costs including cost per person and meeting costs	July meeting
More detail on Service Level Agreement charges	July meeting
2009/10 costs and projected outturn for 2010/11	July meeting
Officer roles and responsibilities	May meeting
Attendance statistics including number of people who attend more than one community council	July meeting

<b>Further investigation request</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>
PA system – alternatives to hire of system	September meeting
Planning – including sub-committee alternatives and impact of Localism Bill	June meeting
Opportunities for sponsorship of community council meetings – including venues and catering options	September meeting

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

6. This is an overview report outlining the issues to be covered in the May meeting of the Democracy Commission. These are:
  - **The role and purpose of community councils**, including the legal framework governing area committees and delegated decision-making powers, and how community councils function in practice (see separate report)
  - **Southwark neighbourhoods and community council boundaries**, including research into natural neighbourhoods, an examination of what is a neighbourhood, existing community council boundaries and options for change (see separate report)

### **Report on Role and Purpose of Community Councils**

7. A detailed report on the “Role and Purpose of Community Councils” has been prepared, covering the formal decision making, engagement and consultative role of community councils.
8. The role and function of community councils is examined in the context of the required budgetary savings.

### **Report on Neighbourhoods and Community Council Boundaries**

9. A further report on “Community Council Neighbourhoods and Boundaries” has been prepared, outlining some potential options for the future delineation of community council boundaries.
10. The report provides the Commission with relevant information on wards in the community council areas, and options for reducing the number of these areas. This was identified as an option for further investigation at the previous meeting of the Commission.

### **For information: Officer roles and responsibilities**

11. Additional information about officer roles at community councils was requested by the Commission at its previous meeting, which is included in paragraphs 13-19.
12. Issues relating to staff numbers are reserved to the chief executive and officers appointed by her. This does not prevent the Commission making recommendations that impact on staffing numbers but if this is the case then these need to be made to the Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance who will consider whether they are implementable.

## **Community Councils – Constitutional Team**

13. The community council team are responsible for the constitutional and administrative aspects of the community council meetings. They are responsible for ensuring that community council decisions are taken within the constitutional and legislative framework.
14. The team consists of 1 principal constitutional officer and 3 community council officers. The team sits within the larger constitutional team. Each team member covers 2 community council areas and clerk main and planning meetings.
15. The principal constitutional officer manages the team and community council budget and has other roles within the constitutional team. For example: acting as deputy to the constitutional manager and responsibilities for aspects of the committee management system.
16. Community Council Officers have the following roles and responsibilities:
  - Arranging venue and transport/security services
  - Scheduling community council meetings for the municipal year including report deadlines
  - Supporting the community council chair for example through agenda planning and procedural advice
  - Maintain up-to date distribution lists for community council agenda
  - Agenda planning, include the co-ordination of formal reports for the agenda
  - Agenda preparation and publication, including checking of reports
  - Providing constitutional advice to officers, members of the public and councillors prior to and during meetings
  - Responsible for meeting set up including arranging PA system and liaising with the venues
  - Clerking community council main and planning meetings
  - Drafting and publication of community council meeting minutes
  - Drafting and publishing community council decision notices
  - Following up on public question time – forwarding questions to officers and co-ordinating responses for the next meeting
  - Maintaining and updating community council meeting webpages in the council and democracy pages of the website

## **Community Councils – Neighbourhoods team**

17. The neighbourhoods team ensures that Community Councils engage more people with their work and covers all aspects of the local community. It also supports the role of ward Councillors in their community leadership role. The team works across Council services to ensure local people are engaged in place-shaping and area-based initiatives
18. The team consists of a Neighbourhood Manager and 1 Co-ordinator and Community Council Development officer for each quadrant (each quadrant covers two Community Council areas)
19. Neighbourhood Co-ordinators have the following roles and responsibilities:
  - Co-ordinates action after Community Council meetings where a cross-service response is needed or when Members establish sub-groups e.g. Peckham has

a longstanding Transport sub-group; Rotherhithe have set up a group focussing on Albion Street

- Advises and undertakes the community engagement aspect of area-based initiatives e.g. Peckham Area Action Plan; Camberwell Development Team; Elephant and Castle Regeneration
- Working closely with the Chair and Vice Chair to promote Community Councils as *'more than a meeting'* so that there is greater inter-action and participation at CC meetings so would arrange workshops; commission films; arrange markets/events e.g. Bermondsey Jobs Fair; youth-themed workshops; Dulwich Festival event
- Responsible to the Chair for establishing and monitoring the effectiveness of Community Council forward plans, which set out Members priorities and themes for CC meetings for the municipal year.
- Providing briefings to CC Chairs and Vice Chairs on issues raised and acting as a resource for ward Members.
- Ensures that an Annual Review of Community Councils is completed.
- Supervises the Community Council Development Officer and cost centre manager for the Community Council Fund and marketing and publicity budget.
- Takes on one of four Borough-wide responsibilities for Community Councils- assisting the Neighbourhoods Manager in this role: (Communications; Monitoring and Evaluation; Outreach; Community Council Fund)
- Being the initial point of contact for members of the public for the two CC areas they're responsible for through the 'In my Area' pages on the Council website.
- Works in partnership with other key agencies within their areas to secure better services for residents by pooling resources and collaborative working. e.g. South Bermondsey Partnership.

20. Community Council Development Officers have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Undertakes outreach within their identified areas to promote attendance and participation at Community Councils.
- Identifies and signposts Community groups and individuals to capacity-building initiatives working closely with other colleagues to avoid duplication e.g. events training
- Monitors attendance at CC meetings and provides feedback to Members after meetings
- Identifies gaps in attendance and targets initiatives to meet those that are hard to reach through an Improvement Plan for each CC area
- Implements a communications plan to encourage attendance at meetings and informing local people about Community Councils thorough all forms of media

- Promotes and manages the Community Council Fund, presenting reports to Members and CC meetings
  - Supports the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator in maintaining links with other area-based initiatives (e.g. youth providers networks; area housing forums) to promote the role of CC meetings and avoid duplication in terms of community engagement between departments.
  - Takes on one of four Borough-wide responsibilities- assisting the Neighbourhoods Manager- in terms of community engagement (Civic engagement assisting the Mayor; providing background information for the Democracy Commission; Communications; assisting colleagues in promoting the Council Assembly.)
21. A protocol between the neighbourhoods and constitutional teams covering the management arrangements around community councils is included at Appendix 1.

### **Policy implications**

22. The terms of reference for the Democracy Commission phase two have been drawn up within the specific context of current council policies, plans and strategies. The information gathered during the second phase of the commission's work will provide opportunities for the council to engage in debate with residents and will potentially provide decision makers with new information when developing council policy.

### **Community impact statement**

23. The aim of the Democracy Commission is to bring the Council closer to its residents, making it more accountable to them and more connected with their concerns. The work of the Commission will be led by the Community Engagement team that has significant experience in leading work of this nature, aimed at improving the voices of local people in decision-making. The engagement activity will be underpinned by principles of equality and human rights (including the new public sector equality duty which comes into force in April 2011) and will reflect the diverse residents of the borough.

### **Resource implications**

24. No additional budget is required for the setting up of the commission and stage two of its work. Any costs will be covered within existing resources. The commission will be required to bear in mind the need to keep under review the officer and other resources required to support its work and the implementation of its recommendations within the context of increasing resource constraints on the council.
25. The task of the Commission will be to deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012 as agreed in the council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2011-2014.

### **Consultation**

26. The work of the commission includes public consultation and involvement: public meetings and conferences, questionnaires, focus group and recording vox pops. This work will be developed and improved upon during phase two.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission Phase 2 reports and agenda	Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TZ	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Community Council Management Arrangements

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
<b>Report Author</b>	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	19 May 2011	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	No
Finance Director	No	No
List other officers here		
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	19 May 2011	