



DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Thursday 26 May 2011 at 7.00 pm
at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT:	Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair) Councillor Columba Blango Councillor Mark Glover Councillor Michael Mitchell Councillor Helen Morrissey Councillor Paul Noblet Councillor Cleo Soanes
OFFICER SUPPORT:	Stephen Douglass (Head of Community Engagement) Alexa Coates (Principal Constitutional Officer) Ian Mark (Senior Lawyer, Governance Team) Darryl Telles (Neighbourhoods Manager) Tim Murtagh (Constitutional Officer)

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Mohamed welcomed councillors and officers to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

There were none.

3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the chair.

5. DEMOCRACY COMMISSION: OVERVIEW REPORT FOR MAY MEETING - ROLE AND PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND BOUNDARIES

Councillor Soanes explained that Peckham Community Council (CC) did not have a Transport sub-group as the report had stated. Councillor Glover said that was Nunhead & Peckham Rye CC that had the sub-group.

Members asked for clarification that the report on neighbourhood and boundary options was a discussion paper and that no decision had been taken. The chair confirmed that this was the case and that the Commission were asked to consider the current boundaries and options for change.

5.1 ROLE AND PURPOSE

Ian Mark, Senior Lawyer – Governance Team, gave an overview of the legal framework and the paper on role and purpose. Members discussed various options including reducing the number of area committees. Members requested further details on the arrangements of other, comparable local authorities. Officers agreed to provide a further summary of a selection other local authorities and their arrangements for area forums/committees.

Ian said he would come back on how and when the use of delegated powers under the strong leader model may happen.

5.2 NEIGHBOURHOODS & BOUNDARY OPTIONS

Members considered possible changes to Community Council boundaries in light of the options set out in the report. The options took into account traditional areas within Southwark along with population sizes. Member noted that the size and population of a particular community council area could not exceed two fifths if decision-making powers were to remain.

Some issues such as Elephant and Castle regeneration were currently dealt with at more than one Community Council and that would probably happen increasingly if areas were enlarged. Members commented that it may be difficult to agree agendas in future if larger areas were implemented.

Members discussed the permutations of fewer Community Council areas and less meetings. The budget was made up of fixed costs such as staffing, and variable costs for meetings. Members requested further information on the financial impact of reducing the level of meetings, for example if meetings were reduced from 6 a year to 5 or 4. Staffing costs would be discussed in closed session.

Members discussed if taking away planning meetings from Community Councils would pass additional costs to the planning department. The head of planning would be invited to the next Democracy Commission meeting to discuss this.

Officers explained that some of the budget was not simple to quantify such as amounts paid for officers attending meetings to present reports or take questions.

Members discussed the issue of splitting wards which most were keen to avoid in any boundary review, although it was stated that under current arrangements the split of Livesey between Peckham and Rotherhithe Community Councils worked in practice and reflected how some residents identified with their location.

Members requested that options for reducing costs be presented to the public at community council meetings to gauge their opinion. Officers said that this could be done at the Community Councils in September and would request items at the Chair's and Vice Chair's meeting in July.

Action: Tim to circulate dates for future meetings.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The chair asked residents for additional comments. There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

CHAIR:

DATED: