

Item No: 2	Classification: OPEN	Date: 1 November 2004	Meeting Name: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Report Title:		Call-In: Individual Decision [26 th October] in respect of Modernising Face to Face Services – Bermondsey Cash Office	
Ward(s) or Group affected:		Riverside, Grange & South Bermondsey	
From:		Head of Overview and Scrutiny	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Overview & Scrutiny Committee [OSC] considers a call-in request relating to the Open decision taken by the Executive Member for Resources on 26th October 2004 in respect of Modernising Face to Face Services – Bermondsey Cash Office.
2. That OSC consider the following recommendations of the Executive Member:
 - That, in view of the financial implications and the success in promoting alternative payment methods, it is recommended not to proceed with the re-provision of a Council cash office facility in Bermondsey.
 - That officers take further action over the next 6 months to promote alternative methods of payment including extending where possible facilities for cash payments through local outlets in Bermondsey and through Post Offices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In April 2004, the Executive agreed the “Modernising face to face review of Council services” report which included a recommendation to close 3 cash offices, (Abbeyfield, Dulwich and Southwark Town Hall) by 30 September 2004 and to keep the remaining 3 cash offices open until the effect of closures could be reviewed, with a report back expected on the impact in 3 to 6 months following closure.
4. As part of the Spa Rd. Regeneration Project, the existing site for the Alfred Salter Neighbourhood Housing Office and the Spa Road Cash Office has been sold and will be replaced by residential accommodation. Therefore, the Alfred Salter building will no longer be available to provide Council services from the 31st March 2005, coinciding with the opening of the new Bermondsey One Stop Shop in Spa Road and the go-live date of Southwark Customer Service Centre.
5. When the decision was taken by Executive to proceed with the disposal of the Alfred Salter site in November 2003 it was planned to re-provide a cash office facility either in the new One Stop Shop in Spa Road or by reinstating the former facility in the Spa Road Town Hall.

6. However, since November 2003 visitor numbers at Council cash offices have reduced, 20 new cash payment locations in Bermondsey have been introduced and are used by residents, the Bermondsey One Stop Shop will be opening in April 2005 accepting cheque and card payments and the Customer Service Centre accepting phone payments will be operational from May 2005. The change in customer preferences and increase in different payment options combined with high capital development and running costs, means that the Investment required in a new cash office must be rethought.
7. On 20th October 2004, under the Individual Decision Making Scheme, the Executive Member for Resources – Cllr Lorraine Zuleta – took the decision not to re-provision Bermondsey Cash Office, as outlined in paragraph 2.
8. On 29 October 2004 in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules [para 18] a request for call-in of this decision, made by Cllr Fiona Colley, and supported by Councillors Kim Humphreys [Chair], Barrie Hargrove and Andy Simmons, was received.

The reason given for the call-in request was as follows:

- (1) Failure to consult local tenants and residents;
 - (2) Quality of analysis of impact of planned Post Office closures on demand for Council Cash Office Services in Bermondsey;
 - (3) Lack of Information on tenants and residents preferred option for making payments;
9. Previous reports/minutes relating to this item are attached as follows, i.e.
 - Appendix A: Individual Executive Member Decision-Making Record of Decision [26th October 2004] Modernising Face to Face Services – Bermondsey Cash Office.
 - Appendix B: Individual Executive Member Decision-Making Report from Strategic Director for Resources [October 2004] Modernising Face to Face Services – Bermondsey Cash Office.
 - Appendix C: Call-in request

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

10. Requests for call-in should normally only be made if there is evidence that the Executive did not take a decision in accordance with the principles of decision making as set out in the Council's Constitution, i.e.:

- (a) Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the outcome);
 - (b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers;
 - (c) Respect for human rights;
 - (d) Presumption in favour of openness;
 - (e) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes;
 - (f) The link between strategy and implementation must be maintained;
 - (g) Decision-making generally, whether by individual Officers, individual Executive Members or the Executive collectively, should have reference to the policy framework and be in accordance with the budget.
8. The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules require the Committee to consider any call-in request and in particular whether or not the decision might be contrary to the policy framework or not wholly in accordance with the budget. Advice should be sought from appropriate Chief Officers including the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer.
9. If, having considered the decision and all relevant advice, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is still concerned about it, then it may either:
- Refer it back to the decision-making body *[or officer to whom responsibility for that decision was delegated]* for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns; or
 - Refer the matter to Council Assembly if the decision is deemed to be outside the policy and budget framework.
10. The Executive Member with relevant portfolio responsibilities has been advised of this meeting.

LEGAL & FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. Rule 18.6 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules requires a call-in request to be signed by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus three members of the Committee; the call-in request has been validly made in accordance with this rule. Rule 18.2 which sets out the circumstances in which call-in requests should normally be made is reflected in paragraph 5 of this report. The decision of the Executive is not contrary to the policy framework and accords with the budget.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held at	Contact
Executive Agenda, Reports and Minutes	Constitutional Team Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB	Everton Roberts Tel: 0207 525 7221

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny	
Report Author	Stephanie Dunstan, Scrutiny Project Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	29 th October 2004	
Key Decision ?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS/DIRECTORATES/EXECUTIVE MEMBERS		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	No	-
Chief Finance Officer	No	-
Executive Member	No	-