

Item No: 1	Classification: OPEN	Date: 17 th November 2003	Meeting Name: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Report Title:		Call-In: Communications Strategy	
Ward(s) or Group affected:		All Wards	
From:		Head of Corporate Strategy	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Committee considers a call-in request relating to a decision taken by the Executive on 4th November 2003 in respect of Southwark's external communications strategy and action plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. On 4th November 2003 the Executive considered the report, *Building Better Communications – A Communications Strategy for Southwark*, from the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Strategy) – attached at Appendix A - and the following decisions were made:
 - i. That the external communications strategy and action plan be welcomed and agreed as a means of fulfilling the recommendations of the Executive meeting in January 2003 as set out in (II) below.
 - ii. The Executive notes the implementation measures already underway (as set out in paragraphs 7 – 12 of the report) and welcomes the appointment of the new communications managers who will set in process further budgetary, communication and implementation detailed in the strategy document.
 - iii. That the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance & Strategy) be instructed to review the delivery and progress of the communications strategy annually and report the findings to the Executive for information.
3. On 10th November 2003 the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Kim Humphreys, and three members of the Committee (Councillors John Friary, Barrie Hargrove and Andy Simmons) called in this decision.

The reasons given for the call-in were as follows:

“Question the implication of officers promoting individual Executive Members who are politicians and who may benefit politically, and no balance between Executive and Scrutiny with regard to Communications.”

4. Previous reports/minutes relating to this item are attached as follows, i.e.

Appendix A: Executive cover report: “Building Better Communications – A Communications Strategy for Southwark” and “Building Better Communications – Corporate Communications Improvement Plan”

Appendix B: Southwark Council Communications Strategy

Appendix C: Extract from 4/11/03 Executive minutes

Appendix D: Call-in request

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Requests for call-in should normally only be made if there is evidence that the Executive *[or officer to whom responsibility for that decision was delegated]* did not take a decision in accordance with the principles of decision making as set out in the Constitution:
- (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
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. The Members of the Executive with relevant portfolio responsibilities have been advised of this meeting.

LEGAL & FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. 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 6 of this report. The decision of the Executive is not contrary to the policy framework and accords with the budget.