



DEMOCRACY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Democracy Commission held on Friday 8 July 2011 at 6.30 pm at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Abdul Mohamed (Chair)
Councillor Mark Glover
Councillor Michael Mitchell
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor Cleo Soanes

OTHER MEMBERS

PRESENT: Councillor Poddy Clarke

OFFICER

SUPPORT: Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement
Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager
Ebony Riddell-Bamber, Community Participation Manager
Darryl Telles, Neighbourhoods Manager
Tim Murtagh, Constitutional Officer

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Abdul Mohamed welcomed councillors, officers and residents to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Columba Blango.

3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.

5. STAFFING ROLES

The Democracy Commission considered the information set out in the closed agenda in closed session.

At the conclusion of the closed business the meeting returned to open session.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and signed by the chair.

7. LOCALISM

Stephen Douglass introduced the report on the Localism Bill. Members discussed in general terms the possible impact on community councils and the changing nature of devolved powers.

Members discussed the public sitting on sub-groups and the existence of co-opted members on certain other committees.

8. PLANNING AT COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Stephen Douglass introduced the report on planning options requested by the commission at the April meeting. Members discussed retaining the planning function at community councils, the removal of it and the possibility of developing another model. Each would result in a different level of saving to the community council budget.

Members expressed their support for retaining some planning function at member level which would mean there was still a degree of accountability. There was concern over the number of applications that were decided out of date by community councils. Members also discussed the level of responses required before an application was triggered and referred to community council planning meetings. Several expressed the view that it should be raised from its current level of three and that in turn would reduce the number of applications and meetings.

Members looked at the sub-committee models and discussed the North-South and East-

West possibilities. They sought clarity on what would happen to decisions no longer taken by community councils under any future arrangements and said that if the burden was simply passed to the main planning committee there may be little point in making the change.

The chair said that the options and scope in the planning department to consider further delegated applications required exploration with planning officers.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

In response to public questions, Ebony Riddell-Bamber explained that questionnaires on the process had been circulated at the June round of community councils. Members of the commission would be attending the September round of meetings to consult directly with those who attend community councils.

Members requested that the consultation process and dates of forthcoming consultation meetings be publicised on the website, in one place.

Action: Ebony to circulate the list of commission members who will address the September round of community councils and consult the public.

Council Assembly 6 July

The chair wanted to formally thank on behalf of the commission those who had contributed to making the Council Assembly at Walworth Academy on 6 July 2011 such a success.

The positive impact of the deputations was noted along with the large number of young people who attended. Officers reported that they were following up the event with young people to find out how they felt about it generally.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: