

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open/Closed	Date: 14 November 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission
Report title:		Shaping the recommendations: Summary of options for the future of community councils	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Democracy Commission considers the options set out in the appendices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The cabinet in January 2011 initiated the review of community councils and asked the Democracy Commission to identify savings of £344,000 as the community council contribution to council's budget savings. These savings will take effect in 2012/13. The commission is now due to report back to the cabinet in January 2012.
3. The Democracy Commission on 22 September 2011 considered the final evidence submitted to it as part of its review of community councils. There remains some consultation feedback to be received; this is from two community councils meetings and any additional questionnaire responses received by the date of the November meeting (an item is included elsewhere on the agenda). The commission also considered how it wished to consider shaping the recommendations. Having considered possible areas of consensus and those issues requiring further consideration, the commission asked that officers prepare a summary of options based on the evidence submitted to date for the next meeting.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Introduction

4. Appendix A sets out a summary of the options prepared for the commission to consider; the detailed options with costings are set out in the spreadsheets in Appendix B (see the closed agenda). It should be noted that these costings are estimates based on the evidence submitted to date. The summary of options is divided into two sections:
 - General Savings from the constitutional team and neighbourhood team budgets
 - Individual options – the general savings are included in most of the options.

The general savings reflect some of the areas of consensus such as school governor function decision making or specific savings identified by officers during the evidence gathering meetings of the commission.

Options

5. The options in the spreadsheets are based on the following scenarios which are applied in different combinations:
 - Retain eight community councils
 - Retain same level of meetings
 - Reduce the number of meetings to five or four per annum
 - Reduce the number of community council to five
 - Reduce the level of neighbourhood support to community council meetings e.g. workshops, outreach work with sub-groups, special events such as job fairs.

Planning models

6. In addition the various options for the planning function at community councils, considered by the commission on 8 July 2011, have also being applied in the various spreadsheets. The planning options are:
 - Model A – Retain the existing planning function at community councils
 - Model B – Delete the planning function from community councils
 - Model C – Establish one planning sub-committee to consider minor applications
 - Model D – Establish two planning sub-committees.
7. A fuller summary of the planning models is set out in Appendix C.

Shaping the recommendations

8. The commission is now asked to review the options and provide a steer on which option(s) it would like officers to use as a basis for preparing its draft report. This draft report will be circulated in advance of and considered by the final scheduled meeting of the commission on 7 December 2011.
9. This will allow the commission to complete its report for cabinet in January 2012. In January 2011 the cabinet will consider report of the commission including proposals for identifying £344,000 savings.

Community impact statement

10. The community councils are part of the council's programme of community engagement across the borough. The meetings, attended by local people, consider local issues including discussions and consultations on council wide issues and matters that affect the areas. The community councils also take some local decisions.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission – Agenda and minutes – 8 August 2011 and 22 September 2011	Communities, Law & Governance, 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Summary of options
Appendix B (see the closed agenda)	Options for community councils
Appendix C	Planning options and potential savings

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 November 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		4 November 2011