

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 12 May 2020 at 5.00 pm (Virtual/Online Meeting).

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)  
Councillor Jane Salmon (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Humaira Ali  
Councillor Anood Al-Samerai (Reserve)  
Councillor Peter Babudu  
Councillor Helen Dennis  
Councillor Gavin Edwards  
Councillor Alice Macdonald  
Councillor Jason Ochere  
Councillor Victoria Olisa  
Councillor Leanne Werner

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Richard Livingstone  
Councillor Rebecca Lury

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Norman Coombe, Head of Corporate Team, Legal Services  
Everton Roberts, Head of Overview and Scrutiny (Acting)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Victor Chamberlain.

### 2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair agreed to accept the following late items:

Item 5 – Scrutiny Call-in: Contract Award – generalist community legal advice services 2020-2025

Item 6 – Scrutiny call-in: Delivering a Climate Strategy for Southwark

Item 9 – #Southwark Together: Council Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

### 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Victoria Olisa declared an interest in item 5, 'Gateway 2 Contract Award – generalist community legal advice services 2020-2025' as she was a trustee of the Southwark Law Centre. Councillor Olisa indicated that she would not take part in the discussion on the item.

### 4. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 11 November 2019, 27 January 2020 and 29 January 2020 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### 5. SCRUTINY CALL-IN: CONTRACT AWARD - GENERALIST COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE SERVICES 2020-2025

Councillor Jane Salmon, introduced the reasons for call-in.

The committee heard from Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities and Jessica Leech, Community Engagement Manager.

The committee also heard from Tim Clark, Citizens Advice Southwark and Sally Causer, Southwark Law Centre.

The committee discussed the merits of the call-in and agreed the following:

#### RESOLVED:

1. That having considered the decision and all relevant advice, that the matter not be referred back to the cabinet member for consideration.
2. That the following recommendations be referred to the deputy leader and cabinet member for culture, leisure, equalities and communities for consideration:
  - That a review of the budget process be undertaken with providers and draw out any lessons to be learnt for future processes.
  - That the council and service providers work together on a longer term approach to deal with the long term implications relating to Covid-19.
  - That the impact of the budget reductions on the service be monitored.
  - That the council review very seriously the capacity of advice services to continue to respond to increased demand for advice services in light of Covid-19.

## **6. SCRUTINY CALL-IN: DELIVERING A CLIMATE STRATEGY FOR SOUTHWARK**

Councillor Humaira Ali introduced the call-in.

The committee heard from Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency and Chris Page, Climate Change Director.

The committee discussed the merits of the call-in and agreed the following:

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That having considered the decision and all relevant advice, that the matter not be referred back to cabinet for consideration.
2. That the cabinet member for environment, transport and the climate emergency is requested to:
  - Produce a document for submission to the 2 June OSC meeting outlining additional consultation that can be carried out between now and July 2020.
  - Produce a clear timetable within the next 10 working days of when the cross party working group will be established.
  - Ensure engagement and consultation with young people through the next two months ie through the setting up of a youth council to engage with young people.
  - That as part of the consultation, a concerted effort be made to reach the BAME community, young and older people as sometimes with environmental issues they tend to be left out of the process and classed as hard to reach.

## **7. SCRUTINY COMMISSION CHAIR UPDATES**

The committee received updates from the scrutiny commission chairs.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the latest developments in respect of the work of the scrutiny commissions for the 2019/20 year as set out in the scrutiny commission chair updates be noted.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20**

The chair requested that committee members give some consideration of scrutiny topic areas that Overview and Scrutiny Committee might want to consider over the next 12 months.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the work programme as at 12 May 2020 be noted.

## 9. #SOUTHWARKTOGETHER: COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Having heard from cabinet members and chief officers at the last meeting, the committee discussed the issues raised and agreed recommendations as detailed below:

### **RESOLVED:**

That cabinet consider the following recommendations from overview and scrutiny committee in respect of the council response to Covid-19 Pandemic:

#### Overall response and process

1. That the decisions of cabinet in respect of the council response to Covid-19 pandemic be noted and supported.
2. That the council provide overall coordination to ensure that aid duplication is avoided between the NHS, Southwark Council Community Hub operations, charities, religious institutions and mutual aid groups as well as formally recognising the role of the thousands of volunteers supporting the effort in these unprecedented times. Until now there is no one visibly taking the lead across all bodies. Many charities, religious groups and residents are still looking to the Council to be that body.
3. That the council ensure that it is using all resources available to best use during a crisis or in the event that business continuity procedures are invoked. Councillors hold a great deal of knowledge about their wards and the council must ensure this is leveraged to avoid duplication of knowledge. The role of councillor must be clearly defined as part of the Council Business Continuity Plans.
4. That as part of new councillor induction, all Councillors should receive a briefing on the Council's Business Continuity plan and training on the role of Councillors during an event which invokes the Business Continuity response, especially a crisis.
5. That a cross party working group be established as soon as possible to help plan for the borough post the lifting of the Covid-19 lockdown.

#### Adult Social Care

6. That cabinet ensure that it is clearly outlined over the coming two months what the transition plan is around mutual aid groups providing adult care services. This is to give assurance that there is a smooth process in place for the council to find out which adult services of care mutual aids are carrying out and how the council plans to take this on when volunteers return to work/no longer have the capacity to provide the same level of care.
7. That cabinet take proactive steps to co-ordinate weekly testing of all care staff and residents in Southwark care homes as a matter of urgency, in order to ascertain the level of Covid-19 infection.
8. That cabinet liaise with each Southwark care home provider to ensure that the relevant PPE and levels of PPE are being used in each local care home, to protect care staff as much as possible.

9. That cabinet monitor the pay of care staff at this time, to ensure that none of these low paid workers are being disadvantaged at this time, especially if they have to self-isolate themselves or shield themselves due to their medical conditions, as there is some evidence in the care industry, that some care workers are receiving less than their usual OSP during this crisis.
10. That cabinet remind all care providers to adhere to the key principles of the Ethical Care Charter that exists across the borough, especially at this difficult time.
11. That in respect of some key figures which will ultimately need to be acted upon, cabinet be recommended to:
  - Establish the number of vulnerable and shielded individuals that the council has not been able to make contact with via any of its departments [and adapt the council's outreach strategy to get this figure to as near to zero as practical].

#### Education

12. That in respect of some key figures which will ultimately need to be acted upon, cabinet be recommended to:
  - Confirm the Council's own estimates of the number of vulnerable children not physically attending schools that need assistance (e.g. equipment, internet) to effectively access education
13. That once the Government has allowed schools to reopen under safe circumstances, the council look at what support it can offer in terms of afterschool, weekend and holiday clubs to assist children to catch up on missed schooling. This support could be funding for schools, providing space in council buildings or helping to coordinate DBS checked volunteers to offer appropriate provision

#### Children's Services

14. That the council monitor the number of nurseries and daycare centres for liquidity, capacity and ability to function post lock down. If there is a shortfall the council should rapidly agree a plan and put the appropriate provisions in place. Additionally, it should monitor the demand for number of paid 2, 3 and 4 year old places and see if additional provision is required/can be supported.
15. That cabinet consider what the council might be able to do to mitigate any negative impact of COVID 19 on childcare provision.

#### Local Economy / Businesses

16. That the council examine how it can review its procurement procedures to promote and prioritise local businesses (particularly SMEs) for example using local contractors to bring empty homes back into use.

#### Public Health

17. That the cabinet ensure the continued prioritisation of mental health & wellbeing and

partnership working with the NHS and SLAM.

18. Overview and scrutiny committee welcomes the measures put in place to support social distancing through maximising pedestrian space and calls on cabinet to continue identifying measures that can be taken to make streets safer for keyworkers, essential journeys and physical exercise during lockdown and in the longer term to support increased cycling and walking.
19. That the Southwark Climate Strategy team actively consider how to embrace the environmental opportunities the lockdown has provided before people return to the way things were.
20. That the Council (with Transport for London) take steps to prioritise pedestrians, runners and cyclists to keep two metres apart on most roads. This is an opportunity to trial the priority of these groups on roads, by, for example, ensuring non-major roads are prioritised for pedestrians (and cyclists) and introducing temporary traffic calming/access measures on residential streets. Ward councillors should be consulted on how to do this sympathetically. We also support the recommendations from Southwark Cyclists in response to COVID-19.

#### Financial hardship and council tax reduction claimants

21. That the cabinet investigate extending the council tax reduction scheme of 100% of council tax to all \*low income households (\*as currently defined by the council) during the financial year 2020/21.
22. That cabinet investigate offering all Southwark council tenants who request it, a 'holiday' from paying rent in the current financial year with the arrears incurred to be paid off slowly over a mutually agreed time frame (e.g. 2-3 years). This payment holiday would exclude any part of the rent which is paid for by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.
23. That the council write to housing associations and registered social landlords (including the Corporation of London) in Southwark to request a similar payment holiday and repayment plan to be offered to tenants in housing association properties.
24. That the council bolster the support available from the council for tenants who are renting privately, and should publicly call on private landlords to offer their tenants payment holidays similar to the schemes outlined above.
25. That the council write to all residents to inform them of these new arrangements and any other financial support which is available to support them in this difficult time. The Council should ensure this information is localised (where appropriate) and produced in a range of accessible formats and languages.

#### Homelessness

26. That cabinet provide an update to overview and scrutiny committee as soon as information is received from the government on what the council plans are regarding homeless people that have no recourse to public funds.

## Housing

27. That the council commit to ensuring that all those being temporarily housed during the pandemic are not forced to return to the streets after the pandemic. We believe this could provide an opportunity to explore a rapid expansion of the 'Housing First' policy.

## Community Safety

28. That it be noted that there was a promise to provide more information to overview and scrutiny committee on the outcome of domestic abuse cases for example whether perpetrators have left or whether the survivors have had to move.

## Information Technology / Organisation Transformation

29. That a report is presented to the September Cabinet meeting outlining the resulting benefits from remote and flexible working during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in utilising technological innovation and reviewing the use and potential savings from the Council's office estate.

## Recovery and renewal

30. That a report be presented to the July Cabinet meeting outlining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council Plan 2018-22 in terms of changed targets and timescales, and specifically any changes relating to the Council's Emergency Plan.

## Community impact

31. Overview and scrutiny committee welcomes the establishment of a review by Public Health England into disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19 on BAME groups and calls on cabinet to assess how to carry out the council's own review in Southwark of the impact of both Covid-19 and the council's response on people from black and minority ethnic groups.
32. That overview and scrutiny committee calls on cabinet to investigate how the council can collect borough-level disaggregated data on the impact of Covid on different groups including women, children, the elderly and people from minority ethnic groups.
33. That cabinet assess whether Council communications are adequately reaching all residents, for example those for whom English is a second language.
34. That in respect of cabinet decision 11 of the report in respect of the council continuing to work with voluntary and community sector partners to explore ways in which to take forward the work that has been delivered in partnership during this crisis. Cabinet is requested to bring forward initial recommendations to cabinet by September.

The meeting ended at 8.54pm

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**