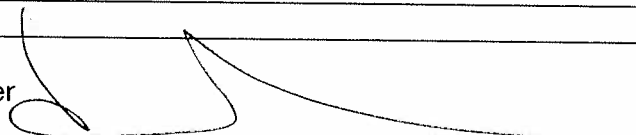


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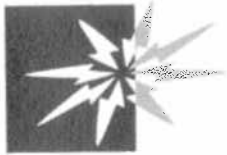
<b>Report for:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Item Number:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	Cabinet Response to Communities Scrutiny Panel on Area Committees.		
<b>Report Authorised by:</b>	Lyn Garner 		
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Stephen McDonnell		
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b> All	<b>Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:</b> Non Key		

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The Communities Scrutiny Panel presented a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 29 April 2013 regarding Area Committees. The report included four recommendations and a response to these is attached in Appendix 1.

## 2. Cabinet Member introduction

- 2.1 I welcome the report of the Communities Scrutiny Panel and their review of the Area Committees. We all recognise the importance of engaging with our communities, including hard to reach groups, and the challenges of doing this effectively.
- 2.2 The outcomes and learning from the scrutiny review will be used to develop revised models for community engagement in the coming year. These will feed into the next Governance Review and will take account of the principles listed in the scrutiny review report.



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### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 To agree the responses to the recommendations provided in Appendix 1.

### **4. Alternative options considered**

4.1 Not applicable.

### **5. Background information**

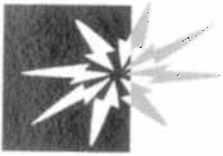
- 5.1 The Governance Review of 2010/11 led to the creation of Area Forums and Committees, replacing the former Area Assemblies. Feeding into these meetings, Area Plans were developed to capture local priorities and issues, and were reviewed and updated quarterly.
- 5.2 Support is provided to the Area Forums and Committees by Democratic Services, the Senior Management Team and the Communications Team. There are no proposals to change this level of support in 2013/14.
- 5.3 The resource for supporting the Area Plans and notifying the community about Area Forum and Committee meetings was in the Enablement Team, within Single Frontline. However, this team has been dis-established as part of the savings plans for 2013/14.
- 5.4 The Communities Scrutiny Panel found that the effectiveness of Area Plans is perceived as being variable, and in general, they are viewed as being ineffective. Area Chairs are discussing the future of the Area Plans in light of the reduction in resourcing following the dis-establishment of the Enablement Team.

### **6. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications**

6.1 This report has no financial implications.

### **7. Head of Legal Services and legal implications**

7.1. There are no specific legal implications arising out of the responses to the recommendations made by the Communities Scrutiny Panel, as contained in Appendix 1.



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## **8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments**

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Tool was completed for the dis-establishment of the Enablement Team in April 2013.
- 8.2 The Enablement Team supported the Area Plans which feed into the Area Committees. However, a smaller proportion of the Area Plans than first envisaged concerns Single Frontline services, and now the plans are established it is envisaged that less support from Single Frontline will be required going forward.
- 8.3 As is the case across the Council, Single Frontline is under pressure to achieve significant levels of savings over the present and coming years which puts at risk non-statutory services such as the Enablement Team.

## **9. Head of Procurement Comments**

- 9.1 This report has no procurement implications.

## **10. Policy Implication**

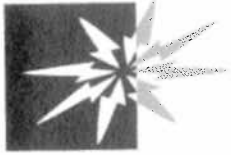
- 10.1 The Council Plan recognises the importance of the Area Forums in building resident empowerment and social inclusion and the Area Forums. Support for the Area Forums and Committees via Democratic Services is unchanged, ensuring the continuation of these meetings.
- 10.2 The Council Plan also sets out the council's priorities including achieving value for money from services. The Plan highlights the challenges arising from the budget cuts, which are affecting services across the council. In this light, the council has to focus resources on delivering statutory and essential services.

## **11. Reasons for Decision**

- 11.1 This report seeks approval of the responses to the recommendations set out in Appendix 1.

## **12. Use of Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Table of responses to recommendations in Overview & Scrutiny Report of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013.



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Appendix 2: Communities Scrutiny Panel Report to Overview & Scrutiny 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

## Appendix 1: Response to Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013 regarding Area Forums and Committees

Recommendation	Response
<p>3.1 That, pending further work on their development, confirmation be provided of how support will be provided for area forums and committees to ensure their continued operation.</p>	<p>Area Forums and Committees are supported by Democratic Services through the committee secretariat. This support takes the form of agenda planning with the Chair of each Forum/Committee, taking responsibility for sending out the agenda to the agreed distribution list, attendance at the meeting and minuting of the area committee meeting. In addition, the Communications Team develops a poster to advertise each meeting and ensures copies are produced to enable councillors to further publicise meetings. Each Area Forum and Committee has a Champion who is a member of the Council's senior management team. There is no further support available at this time to Area Committees and Forums.</p>
<p>3.2 That consultation be undertaken with residents, including hard to reach groups, to obtain their views on possible future models for local engagement.</p>	<p>It is not proposed to carry out additional consultation at this time. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has carried out consultation in undertaking this review which can be utilised as part of the development of proposals for future community engagement. In addition, the Council will use findings from other consultations and best practice from other authorities to develop future models of engagement.</p>
<p>3.3 That officers work with chairs of area forums and committees to develop proposals for alternative means of engagement with local residents for piloting in a number of wards of the borough and to evaluate the success of these.</p>	<p>The Council will use the learning from the Scrutiny Review to support the development of revised engagement models during 2013/14 which in turn will feed into the next Governance review. In the meantime, it is suggested that Area Chairs lead on piloting different methods of engagement with local residents within their different areas during 2013/14. Outcomes of the pilots could be shared at the six weekly Area Chairs' Group meetings (which includes the Cabinet Member for Communities and the Head of Legal Service). The expectation is that Area Chairs will undertake this work.</p>
<p>3.4 That, following the above mentioned pilot projects and consultation with stakeholders, specific proposals for the future of area forums and committees be developed for implementation following the 2014 Council elections and that these be based on the principles outlined within paragraphs 6.4 of the report and clear evidence of effective and cost effective approaches that have been adopted by similar London boroughs.</p>	<p>As noted above proposals for future engagement models including consideration of area forums and committees will be considered as part of the next Governance review. They will take account of the principles listed in paragraph 6.4 of the report.</p>

