

## **LBGS 10-11 Appendix 2**

### **STRATEGIC MONITORING ZONES: Briefing for new members**

#### **Background**

1. Between March 2005 and March 2006, a pilot project was undertaken by London Councils, in the boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Redbridge with the following objectives:
  - To examine the accuracy of user data provided by organisations funded by London Councils;
  - To help ensure that the most reliable methods of data collection are being used;
  - To ensure that services funded on a London-wide or sub-regional basis become properly engaged with those who require those services at a local level;
  - To identify service outcomes and ensure these are reflected in local planning.
2. The project had a steering group comprising London Councils Grants Committee Members, borough grants officers, London Councils officers and the directors of the 4 borough CVSs. The Project reported its findings to the Grants Executive in March 2006. One of the key recommendations was that the Pilot Project should be rolled out across London.

#### **Strategic Regional Monitoring Zones**

3. It was agreed that the Project should be rolled out in tandem with the new funding arrangements and would form one part of a two-part grants monitoring arrangement. London Councils Grants Officers continue to monitor funded organisations against outputs and outcomes and to verify user data.
4. London boroughs have been divided up into 10 Strategic Regional Monitoring Zones (SMZs) – see Appendix One. The steering group of each Zone will examine the wider picture of benefit of funded services in its constituent boroughs and has the same membership and broad objectives as the Benefit Pilot Project ie Grants Committee Members, London Councils officers, borough grants officers and directors of CVSs. The meetings will take place at least twice a year normally around January and July (to reflect on the monitoring position for the previous 6 months) and will be hosted on a rotational basis by boroughs within each zone. The principle activity of the SMZs will be the consideration of collated returns from the commissioned groups compared against the expected delivery patterns from original service specifications.
5. The introductory meetings of the SMZs took place February 2008 with the next round of meetings taking place in September 2008, with the expectation of moving to January and July from 2009.
6. The following is a collated summary of the discussions of the first meetings of SMZs and action that has and will be taken by London Councils in response to issues raised which will help their long-term effectiveness.

#### **Information Needs**

7. SMZs will require information on London Council's funded organisations set out in such a way that it will assist membership of the groups to easily identify specifically what outcomes and benefits both individual boroughs and Zones can expect from

grants made and to be able to ascertain whether actual service delivery is matching what was originally anticipated. To provide a context, it will also be important for SMZs to have baseline information on grants made across all Zones.

**Action 1:** London Councils officers are currently preparing a directory of all organisations funded through the commissioning process. It will be

- divided up between the 12 themes eg Children & Young People, Legal & Advice etc and
- further subdivided into service areas.
- Collective outcomes for each service area will be listed as will
- the organisations funded to deliver those outcomes.

Further information on each organisation will be given such as

- borough base
- area of operation
- contact details
- grant approved

Crucially, the directory will state in each case the anticipated level and geographical spread of services for each organisation. This directory will be a primary reference tool for SMZs when scrutinising whether actual service delivery and achievement of outcomes has been delivered.

The Directory was originally expected to be made available in hard copy and electronically by the beginning of September 2008. Due to the postponement of the July 2008 Grants Committee, there were some commissioning decisions outstanding. It will now be made available in January 2009 when all resources have been allocated.

**Action 2:** In addition to the directory, London Councils officers will prepare a report for each SMZ in advance of their meetings. The structure will be similar to that of the directory but will specifically deal with organisations funded to deliver services within the boundaries of the Zone. The latest statistical returns in relation to actual service delivery will be given and members of the SMZ will be able to easily determine performance of organisations providing services within their boroughs.

By September 2008, there will be only those organisations who received a funding approval in either April or July 2007 who will have been in a position to provide actual service delivery statistics, and that is only for the 8 months up until the end of May 2008. However, officers have prepared reports for each SMZ using these statistics. This will give an opportunity for SMZs to comment upon their structure, contents and usefulness. LC officers can then make any amendments necessary to the presentation of the reports in time for the January/February 2009 SMZs where significantly more commissioned activity will be reported upon.

### **Process and Expectations**

8. SMZs were, understandably, anxious that their role would not be a substitute for robust monitoring of organisations by London Councils Grants Officers. Clarification of how monitoring by officers and the scrutiny provided by SMZs would interface was also required. A clearer understanding of the expectations on groups to ensure effective networking both locally and on a strategic basis was raised.

**Action 1:** It has always been the clear intention of London Councils to continue to individually monitor each and every grant made in accordance with standardised monitoring procedures. These include ensuring that funded organisations are proactively engaged in networking and information sharing both across their geographical areas of service delivery and with other key agencies in London. Officers will provide SMZs with information on monitoring arrangements and requirements in order to clarify the respective roles of grants officers and SMZs in our monitoring processes.

9. Some concerns were expressed that data relating to service delivery might be hard to interpret, or indeed, easy to misinterpret, for example where a London-wide agency was providing a small percentage of its services in an individual borough.

**Action 2:** As in most cases, it is often difficult to entirely anticipate precisely what information needs will be and how they should be presented when new systems of scrutiny are introduced. London Councils have given careful consideration as to how best to present service delivery data to SMZs which will enable them to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, should problems arise, officers will respond as required and develop its information delivery to maximise the effectiveness and satisfaction with the new scrutiny arrangements.

The 'dry run' of limited statistical returns in September 2008 will provide an excellent opportunity for members of each SMZ to give early feedback of the structure, content and usefulness of reporting.

### **Other Concerns**

10. One particular area of concern was the perceived role of 'policing' the sector by SMZs, especially given that the membership includes representatives of local CVSs. It was stressed by officers that the SMZ arrangements should be viewed primarily as a means by which barriers to service delivery can be addressed.

### **Benefits**

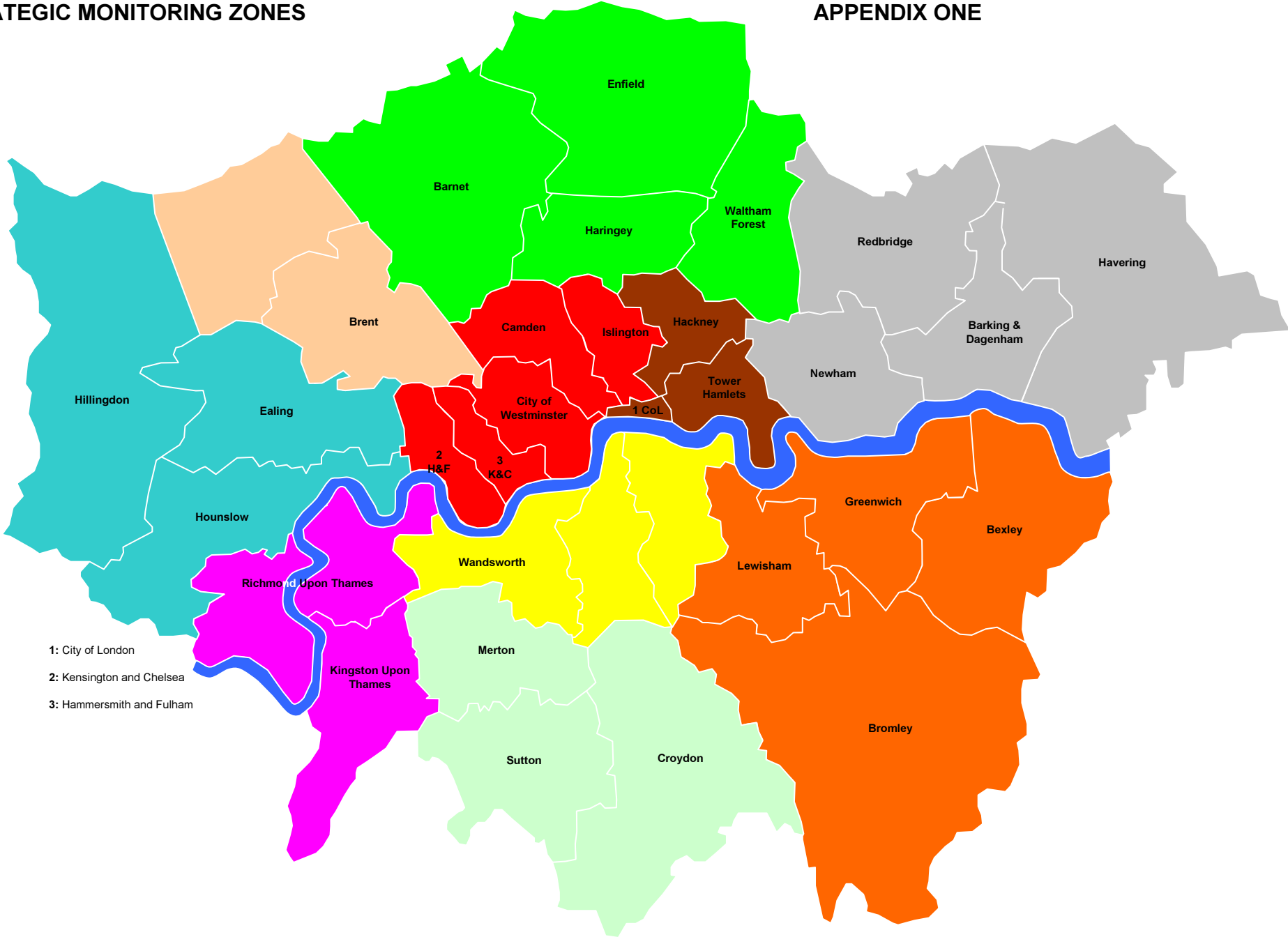
11. The first round of SMZ meetings has clearly demonstrated that, whilst there are concerns about their remit, role and operation, their introduction has been broadly welcomed and, for the first time, individual boroughs should have a clear idea as to exactly what the benefits of London Councils grants have brought to their residents.
12. A number of additional and important potential benefits of the new scrutiny arrangements were noted and these included:
- The development of local strategies will be informed by linking in with London Councils commissioned services which are intended to complement, not replace, local services;
  - The arrangements will be a vehicle for identifying good practice and models of service delivery. It will be important to consider how best this information can be shared both to other SMZs and a wider audience;
  - The process will serve as an 'early warning system' for organisations who are not delivering as expected so that issues around service provision can be solved early, rather than at a later stage;

- In addition to London Councils monitoring of networking and engagement of organisations with other partners, SMZs will be able to identify appropriate networking opportunities within their boroughs thus ensuring that organisations, particularly those who are based externally, have the best insight into how best to deliver their services appropriately regardless of geographical location. Networks should be strengthened by increasing their relevance.

13. A potential link between the work of London Funders and SMZs has already been identified with a number of funders already having expressed an interest in being informed of how they develop and access to the new directory of London Councils funded services (City Parochial, City Bridge Trust and Lottery bodies in particular). This can only enhance London Councils increasing reputation for innovation in the field of funding the voluntary sector.

**STRATEGIC MONITORING ZONES**

**APPENDIX ONE**



- 1: City of London
- 2: Kensington and Chelsea
- 3: Hammersmith and Fulham