

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2012

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Can the leader state how many council homes have been built in Southwark since May 2010? How many council homes will be built in Southwark by May 2014? The promise to build 1,000 council homes has been widely heralded by the leader – could he confirm that this will be a net gain to the borough of 1,000 new council homes?

RESPONSE

13 council homes have been built since 2010, despite the government's 60% cut to the national social housing budget. In the 2010/11 financial year, 10 hidden homes were created out of redundant space within existing housing blocks. In 2011/12, three new houses were completed at Firbank Road, SE15. Seven further hidden homes are in the pipeline to be delivered by May 2014. The cabinet will consider a report on the proposals for new council housing development at our meeting on 23 October and further details on the projections for development will be available thereafter. However, I can say that an indicative development programme has been drawn up for nine phase 1 sites to deliver 217 affordable homes, and it is projected that the sequence of the construction stages across the sites will run from November 2013 to December 2015.

It is impossible to calculate the net gain of council houses that the programme to build 1,000 units will achieve, without details of stock loss due to right to buy sales, sales of void properties and number of losses due to regeneration programmes. Suffice it to say that the government's extension of the right to buy discount will not cut down the number of properties that will be lost from the stock.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

How important is it for Southwark to have not only a strong police presence but infrastructure in order to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour?

RESPONSE

It is vitally important. Local police front desks, in particular, root the police in the community, providing a reassuring police presence and a vital hub for neighbourhood policing. What is most distressing about the changes that are currently taking place in the Metropolitan Police Service, however, is that almost every aspect of our police service is being undermined. Police numbers are falling. Police front desks in community stations are closing and the previous commitment to replace them has been torn up. The organisational structure of our neighbourhood policing has already been diluted through the abolition of some safer neighborhood teams. And the leadership – the steady and experienced hand at the top of our borough's police – has been removed seemingly without any thought given to how or who will replace it in the short-term.

These facts represent the wholesale undermining of our police service. The blame does not lie entirely in any one place. But it is clear that City Hall, responsible for city-wide policing, and those MPs who supported the decision to cut the Metropolitan Police Service's budget by 20% (of which Simon Hughes is the only local example) should shoulder the political responsibility.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

What opportunities will residents have to publicly voice their opinions on the outline application for the regeneration at the Elephant and Castle at committee stage? Does the leader think that one evening at planning committee is enough time to discuss such a major project? Will he commit to holding the relevant planning committee meeting at the Elephant and Castle?

RESPONSE

Planning committee represents the formal point in the decision making process about the master plan for the Heygate. It is not the only time residents will have an opportunity to make their opinions on the scheme known and Lend Lease have been working side-by-side with the local community to co-develop their planning application, which has led to substantive changes and improvements on the original proposals. Since May 2011 Lend Lease have carried out an exemplary programme of pre-application consultation and engagement with residents and other stakeholders interested in their proposals for the Heygate estate. There have been 11 Elephant and Castle Regeneration Forum meetings, three major exhibitions, and 12 liaison group sessions to discuss specific topics arising from the scheme, including housing, sustainability, business and employment, interim uses and community facilities. In addition Lend Lease have visited individual tenant and resident associations, resident groups, and schools affected by the scheme and also regularly attended community council meetings. Through their engagement in this process residents have helped shape the content of the application that Lend Lease have submitted. The evidence for this is set out in the statement of community engagement which Lend Lease have submitted in support of their application.

In turn, planning officers have extended their normal period of consultation for planning applications to six weeks and have issued just under 3,000 letters seeking views on the scheme to residents and community groups. As part of the statutory consultation process there have been 12 drop in sessions at the consultation hub at Walworth Road at which residents could view the planning documents, three of which have been attended by council planning officers.

Arrangements for the planning committee are primarily a question for the chair of planning, acting in his quasi-judicial role.

Further comments from the chair of the planning committee

The planning committee arrangements are long-standing and have been used to make decisions on other large and complex applications. The planning committee is not the appropriate stage in any planning application for the applicant to begin engagement with the community – this should have already happened at the pre-application stage and we would expect the applicant to have undertaken the relevant consultation with local residents to inform their proposals. Rather, the decision-making meeting is the moment that the committee must weigh the evidence and come to a decision. I believe that this can and should be done in a

single meeting. To date 129 representations have been received on the outline planning application and these (and any other responses that are subsequently received) will be summarised in the committee papers and residents will have an opportunity to highlight directly to the planning committee the issues which are still of concern to them. I have recently attended an Elephant and Castle Regeneration Forum with officers to brief interested residents on the committee arrangements and how they can most effectively use the current format to make their points. I am content that the proposed arrangements will allow sufficient time for residents to raise matters of concern and for members of the committee to give them due consideration. Just to remind everyone, this is the outline planning application and each of the elements that make it up, the individual buildings, will have to come before committee for detailed planning permission, over the next 12-15 years, where the impact on the local area and other planning matters will be considered.

I am satisfied that Tooley Street, at 20 minutes maximum travel time from the Elephant and Castle, has the facilities required to hold a public meeting of the sufficient scale and is accessible to people living in the area.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR SUNIL CHOPRA

How does he feel the record of this administration's record on housing compares with the last previous administration?

RESPONSE

It is not a question of a 'feeling' about how our records compare; it is a question of facts. And these are the facts:

- Under the last administration: the number of council homes not warm, dry or safe rising every year, with no programme of improvement works to bring all council homes up to scratch and no certainty for tenants. With this administration: every council home to be made warm, dry and safe by the end of 2015, with a clear timetable and certainty for tenants.
- Under the last administration: zero new council homes built. With this administration: a pledge to build 1,000 new council homes by 2020, more than have been built in the whole of the rest of London in all of the last decade.
- Under the last administration: abject failure to get to grips with the repairs service or crack down on failing repairs contractors. With this administration: a new housing director committed to improving housing services and the contracts of failing repairs contractors cancelled.
- Under the last administration: no leadership to secure the long-term future of council housing in this borough. With this administration: the leadership to task an independent housing commission to set out the long-term choices for our community.

Each one of these progressive steps – the warm, dry and safe programme; the funding for 1,000 new council homes; a new housing director; the housing commission – has been opposed by the opposition. Combined with their disastrous record in power in Southwark and the record of their government it should be clear to all who care about council housing in Southwark, who is best placed to improve the present and secure the future of our borough's council homes.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

Will the leader state how many new a) primary and b) secondary school places will be needed in Southwark by 2015? What is the leader personally doing to support a new secondary school in the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe area?

RESPONSE

The current projections forecast that up to an additional 12 forms of entry or 360 primary reception places will be required in the 2014/15 school year. Officers are working closely with our primary schools in order to meet this, and future, demand.

Ahead of September 2015 the need for secondary Year 7 places should be met by the provision of an additional four forms of entry or 120 Year 7 places at the Ark All Saint's academy, which is due to open in September 2013, and an additional five forms of entry of Year 7 places at the New School Aylesbury, which is due to open in September 2014.

In September 2015 a two forms of entry or 60 pupil shortfall in available Year 7 places is predicted with this shortfall increasing in future years. This pattern of need is supported by the increases in primary rolls currently being experienced. These forecasts indicate a need for further new secondary provision.

Members and officers are working with Compass Free School and the sponsors of the proposed university technical college and support both in their intention to establish new secondary provision in the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe area and I have been fully involved.

Alongside this we are working with other secondary schools to see where it would be possible to add further places as required.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON

How many affordable homes would have been delivered at the Heygate under the previous administration's development agreement and how many will be delivered under agreement secured by this administration?

RESPONSE

The last administration's draft development agreement included no commitment to a guaranteed level of affordable housing. This means that, had they signed it, the proportion of affordable housing would have been decided through the planning process based on what was commercially viable. That figure would have been less than 10%. That would have been between 230 and 247 homes dependent upon the outcome of reserved matters applications.

When we came into power in May 2010 we renegotiated the development agreement to include a guarantee of at least 25% affordable housing: equivalent to 575-617 homes dependent upon the outcome of reserved matters applications.

Put starkly and simply: had the electoral result been different in May 2010, between 345-370 fewer affordable homes would be built on the Heygate site.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

What process does the council currently undertake to verify that developers are meeting their Section 106 commitments?

RESPONSE

I assume that the councillor means “verify”.

Planning obligations are set out in legal agreements that run with the land. These agreements set out the specifics of the obligations, the schedule and the triggers when they are due. These triggers are monitored by officers on an ongoing basis including visiting sites. In most instances the legal agreement places a positive obligation on the developer and successors in title to give notice to the council in advance of obligation becoming due. This allows officers to inform the developer of the amount and any interest due, or other requirements for the proper discharge of an obligation. Should a developer or successor fail to meet its obligations, there are a number of remedies open to the council including injunctive action through the courts.

Officers regularly update the balances and report annually on Section 106 obligations, the next update will be published in December.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS

Could the leader give an update on the work to deliver on Southwark Labour's administration commitment to turn plans for a new One O'Clock Club on Peckham Rye into a reality?

RESPONSE

A project team has been established to take forward the redevelopment of Peckham Rye One O'Clock Club, with a project manager allocated by the property team and representatives from children's services. An initial assessment has been carried out of options for the location of the proposed new building, with a further site visit for the project team scheduled for October 2012. The project is estimated to be completed by autumn 2013.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

As of 1 October 2012, what is the current amount held by the council in a) reserves and b) contingency funds?

RESPONSE

Reserves maintained by the council continue to be reported in detail within the annual statement of accounts. These are open to public scrutiny and are subject to external audit. Reserves are maintained for a number of purposes and the accounts also provide further background and explanation as to the nature and purpose of these reserves. An updated extract of the current position is shown below.

Reserves as of 1 October 2012

Group	Reserve item	Balance
Revenue - Corporate		£
	Modernisation, service & operational improvement reserve	
	General service development pressures	(5,066,247)
	Community, Business and Youth Support Funds	
	Community restoration fund	(115,234)
	Voluntary Sector Transition Fund	(257,416)
	Contract realignment (low paid staff)	(1,051,939)
	Youth Fund Reserve	(469,327)
	Artefacts replacement & security reserve	(579,000)
	Financial Risk & Future Liabilities Reserve	
	Emergency small business relief	(74,000)
	General service development pressures	(2,666,759)
	Funds set aside for future risks	
	Land charges	(200,000)
	Funds set aside for specific projects	
	Early Years Review	(300,000)
	Illegal tobacco	(90,000)
	Internal audit & anti fraud	(356,200)
	Community engagement & Links development	(250,000)
	Queen's Jubilee	(50,000)
	Youth service minibuses	(200,000)
	Schools condition survey	(775,000)
	School improvement	(300,000)
	Youth service restructure	(250,000)
	Revenue Grants	
	Revenue grants	(344,281)
	Service Reviews and Improvements	
	Adult Workforce development	(142,175)
	Blackfriars trust allocation	(137,821)
	Camden Society transition funding support	(300,000)
	Early intervention pilot	(435,000)
	Homelessness	(214,686)
	HR transformation	(290,000)
	LD transfer continuing care returned clients	(315,480)
	Member development	(94,000)
	OT clients adaptations works	(885,500)
	Prita Road rent	(15,092)
	SEN/Learning difficulties	(140,000)
	Homelessness	(200,000)
	Ofsted inspection	(200,000)
	Signage	(108,334)
	Dedicated School Grant	(7,373,371)
	SSF PFI equalisation St Michael's	(57,775)
	SSF PFI equalisation STAC	(60,689)
	Managed accounts underspend	(450,592)
	General Litigation Costs	(172,127)
	Management and administration of elections	(409,383)
	SALIX energy efficiency	(200,000)
	Street Trading	(110,000)

Reserves as of 1 October 2012

Group	Reserve item	Balance
	Street Trading Account	645,071
Capital		
	Capital contingency	(2,650,628)
	Modernisation, service & operational improvement reserve	
	Local public sector agreements	(578,790)
	Performance reward grant	(4,284,914)
	General service development pressures	(1,500,000)
	Regeneration & Development Reserve	
	Canada Water & Bermondsey Spa EIP	(17,044)
	John Harvard Library	(16,600)
	General service development pressures	(5,961,944)
	Funds set aside for specific projects	
	Planned contribution to reserves - Aylesbury	(4,231,191)
	Burgess Park project	(350,000)
	Building compliance	(1,065,585)
	CCTV	(250,000)
	Cator Street development	(12,064)
	Contracts re-alignment reserve (capital)	(1,395,720)
	IT & Customer services development	(3,171,019)
	Carefirst procurement	(200,000)
	Resource Centre	(181,071)
	RFID for libraries	(300,000)
	Strategic financing & technical liabilities	
	Modernisation, service & operational improvement reserve	
	Office accommodation - Queens Rd rental	(673,444)
	Financial Risk & Future Liabilities Reserve	(4,400,000)
	Funds set aside for specific projects	
	Waste PFI Equalisation Reserve	(10,567,394)
	Council tax and housing benefit equalisation	(635,746)
	Funds set aside for future risks	
	Insurance	(9,106,060)
	Refinancing & Interest equalisation	(4,000,000)
	Care homes fees judgement	(1,480,372)
	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Equalisation	(387,733)
	Contractual disputes	(324,257)
	Schools in financial difficulties, schools closures and academies	(482,479)
	TOTAL	(83,286,412)

The vast majority of reserves are for earmarked activities (such as the capital programme) and for financial risks underlying key council functions. The general fund balance is not earmarked, but represents 'working capital' to manage any unforeseen difficulties in the financial position of the council. The current general fund balance is not inconsistent with that held for other London councils, although Southwark is, of course, one of the larger councils and therefore carries at least the equivalent degree of risk.

For 2012/13, the general fund contingency budget is £5.5 million. The main purpose of this contingency is to underwrite the extent of challenges contained within the 2012/13 budget, not least savings targets of circa £27 million, largely necessary to meet reductions in government funding and a continuing increase in demand for critical council services, not least for children and for the elderly. The position of contingency continues to be reported to cabinet on a quarterly basis. Currently (as at quarter 1) adverse variances (circa £3.3 million) will need to be met from the contingency budget.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR THE RIGHT REVEREND EMMANUEL OYEWOLE

Can the leader provide an update on Southwark Circle?

RESPONSE

In June 2009, the council announced funding to establish Southwark Circle, a membership organisation for older people, which provides both help with practical tasks and a social network that aims to increase opportunities for local residents to build up their own informal support networks.

The original research which underpinned the decision to set up Southwark Circle was ground-breaking, and established Southwark as being at the forefront of thinking about the transition of people from the end of their working life to older age.

Following the completion of the first stage of its development, the government have now provided £800,000 to help Southwark Circle grow into "London Circle".

This is an exciting development and we wish Southwark Circle all the best as they take the next exciting step in their journey.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMMELL

How much has been spent on agency staff for a) schools, b) children centres and c) nurseries in the borough since 2011 (broken down in years)?

RESPONSE

One of our chief priorities when we formed an administration in 2010 was cutting down the huge bill for agency staff that the previous administration had left us. From 2006-2010 they spent £109 million on temps and agency staff.

Last year we managed to bring total agency spend down from its previous high by 46%.

The information on total agency spend in the areas requested over the period 2006 to 2012 is set out below. Please note, that children's centre total agency spend is not available. This is because the two council-run children's centres are incorporated into the early years centres' spend and, the council does not hold records specifically on children's centres agency expenditure where these are run by other providers.

Provision	Southwark Early Years Centres (two of these are also Children's Centres) (£)	Maintained Nursery Schools (£)	Maintained Southwark Schools (excluding Nursery Schools above) (£)
2006-07	218,155	156,364	7,120,948
2007-08	410,141	221,232	5,902,999
2008-09	435,423	194,767	6,120,446
2009-10	426,661	298,603	6,471,622
2010-11	332,508	444,652	6,237,561
2011-12	361,984	162,140	5,692,596
2012-13 to Sept 2012	209,697	40,553	1,481,122

We will never be able to bring down agency spend in these areas to zero. The early years centres' spend is mainly incurred when staff cover is needed to maintain minimum child to adult ratios for the childcare provision. Maintained nursery schools and maintained schools have delegated budgets, and therefore the school agency spend is the decision of the head teacher and governors.

Staffing in early years centres is highly regulated in terms of ensuring sufficient staff for the numbers of children daily. When there is short or long term absence, cover staff must be engaged to maintain the appropriate staff to child ratio.

Following a recent review of the council run day care centres, a new operational model will ensure a reduction in agency staff in the future whilst at the same time maintaining the current balance of staff to child ratio.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

How is the council ensuring that the views of parents are included in the review of council-run nurseries?

RESPONSE

The council has conducted an extensive consultation providing the opportunity for parents and other stakeholders to express their views on the future of the nurseries. The responses have been very helpful in planning for future provision and parental views have been taken into account, and will inform the planning going forward.

Parents are also represented on the children's centre advisory boards, and they will have the opportunity to discuss the nursery provision. Follow up meetings with parents will be held when the plans for the operating model are clearer. At present officers are developing options for the future staffing structure of the centres and these will be relayed to parents at meetings in the near future.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Could the leader state how many Olympic tickets were given to councillors and council employees, from whom were they received, and what were the value of tickets individually?

RESPONSE

All gifts and hospitality worth £50 or more received by councillors should be declared and records are available on the council website. All gifts and hospitality received by staff are declared to their appropriate head of service.

196 tickets for the Olympic and Paralympic Games were purchased by Southwark Council in early 2011, as part of a number of tickets that were made available for all London boroughs to purchase. Approximately 50% of these tickets were allocated to children in care via the looked after children service. 64 tickets went to children in care, with 32 staff and support workers accompanying the young people to the events. Where pairs of tickets were available it was a ratio of one staff/support worker to one young person and where there were groups of six, it was a ratio of two staff to four young people. The other 50% of tickets were allocated to Southwark residents via the council's community nomination scheme. A small number (eight) of these tickets were returned by nominated individuals who were unable to make the events for which they had been randomly allocated. These tickets (all for Paralympic events) were added to the 520 tickets received by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) for Paralympic Athletics, and allocated as shown below.

The total face value of the 196 tickets purchased by the council was £38,400, inclusive of VAT. Excluding VAT the cost to the council was £32,033. 50% of the total cost will be met by the Potters Field Park Management Trust; therefore the cost to the council for purchasing London 2012 tickets will be £16,016.

520 tickets to see Paralympic athletics were given to Southwark Council by LOCOG in compensation for the Paralympic Torch Relay not turning up as planned at Surrey Docks Watersports Centre. The council was given only three days to distribute the tickets and given no indication of the value of the tickets, which were given to the council free of charge.

Following approval by the leader and chief executive, these tickets were allocated as follows:

Fusion distributed 144 of the tickets, 46 were allocated to councillors who had attended the proposed Paralympic Torch Relay event, 106 were given to volunteer stewards, 134 to staff that worked on the relay and the remaining 98 were opened up to general staff through The Source when it became clear they would not otherwise be allocated.

The council also received 38 Olympic athletics tickets, at no cost to the council, from Virgin London Marathon, for young people and staff who represented the borough at the London Mini Marathon on Sunday 22 April 2012. 32 young people attended alongside four members of staff, the Mayor and a guest who acted as chaperones for the young people.

14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

What is the average waiting time for a social care users being assessed for a personal budget and actually getting the money?

RESPONSE

The length of time taken to set up a personal budget depends very much on how the person chooses to use their budget. Not all personal budgets are paid to the person. The vast majority of people in Southwark choose to have their personal budget managed by the council.

Where people choose to have a council-managed budget, arrangements are usually put in place within seven days.

Where people choose to manage their own personal budget and some or all is in the form of a cash payment, this takes between one to eight weeks, depending on urgency and complexity.

Some of the reasons why a self-managed budget takes longer to set up are set out below. However, no one is left without a service and interim arrangements are put in place if required:

- More creative support planning takes longer as the focus is on outcomes and generating ideas about how the person wants to achieve these
- The support planning is usually done with the person and their support network so it can involve several meetings including with family and friends where support is provided to help people find the best options for them
- The plan needs to be costed and suitable supports sourced on an individual basis, rather than accessing block contracts
- A separate bank account needs to be set up by the individual and an agreement signed by them.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

How many apprenticeships were created in the borough for each financial year since 2009/10?

RESPONSE

There have been approximately 2,890 apprenticeships created in the borough in the academic years since 2009/10, based on government data. 1,590 apprenticeships were started in 2010/11 and a further 1,300 in 2011/12 so far (noting that 2011/12 data is based only up to March 2012 with this figure expected to be higher when data for the remainder of the academic year becomes available).

38 apprentices started the programme this year working across the range of council departments and services. On top of our own apprenticeship scheme, the council supports apprenticeships across the borough, working with our partners, in several ways, including:

- Supporting construction apprenticeships where possible, negotiated with construction firms through Section 106 agreements

- Working with Connexions Southwark to gather and publish London and borough-wide apprenticeship vacancies each week
- Ensuring that the most vulnerable young people are given the opportunity to fully participate in apprenticeships through work with schools and Lewisham incorporating Southwark College
- Offering advice on opportunities through the Southwark Works programme to clients interested in pursuing an apprenticeship.

As we develop our new economic wellbeing strategy we will be exploring further opportunities to work with businesses across the borough to encourage more apprenticeship schemes locally.

16. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Can the leader of the council explain why the Labour amendment discussed at the full council meeting on 4 July stated "the council's intention to build a new centre for excellence for older people" before a public consultation on the merits of the proposal had even been concluded?" What confidence can staff, service users and their relatives have that the consultation is genuine and meaningful and that all options will be considered including the retention of the existing day centres?

RESPONSE

As has been reported in the minutes of the meeting, this statement in relation to a proposal to build a new centre of excellence was factually incorrect; the council concluded a very successful consultation exercise involving families, stakeholders and members of the public at the end of September. The consultation findings are currently being carefully considered, alongside feasibility studies on the two existing buildings and other sites. The consultation can only be genuine and meaningful if it includes options that are financially possible. As the government has made the largest cash-terms cuts to our budget of any council in London – £90 million in real terms – it is difficult to see how retaining two centres could deliver upon our vision for the centre of excellence, but the council will make a formal decision on this matter in December cabinet.

17. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON (BERMONDSEY AND ROTHERHITHE COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

What is the council doing to pro-actively ensure that conservation areas are respected and improved?

RESPONSE

All developments within conservation areas or affecting their setting are required to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of these important historic areas. In this way we are embracing English Heritage's approach to heritage assets of *managed change*, which requires good design and a sensitive choice of materials.

We also have a number of proactive measures to ensure that our conservation areas are respected and improved which include:

- Preparing conservation area appraisals for every new designated conservation area

- Supporting the conservation areas advisory group which meets on a monthly basis, which includes independent representatives from a number of conservation areas, and reviews planning applications affecting conservation areas and their setting
- Actively seeking external regeneration funding for our conservation areas, e.g. securing £1.6 million through the townscape heritage initiative to improve the recently designated conservation area in Peckham, improving shop fronts in Nunhead and a successful GLA Outer London fund bid will provide further improvements to the Nunhead conservation area
- Providing cleaner, greener, safer funding for projects such as in the Trinity Church Square conservation area
- Making improvements secured through Section 106 agreements, such as in Flat Iron Square in the Union Street conservation area and Redcross Way
- Working with building owners to address specific issues like the proliferation of satellite dishes in the Sutherland Square conservation area
- Replacing trees, where they are removed, with appropriate species.

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES (PECKHAM AND NUNHEAD COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

What improvements does the cabinet member anticipate as a consequence of the cleaner, greener, safer (CGS) revenue money allocated to the cleanliness of Rye Lane by the Peckham and Nunhead community council?

RESPONSE

From April 2012, the additional funding has enabled the street cleaning team to extend the hours of operation in the area. Cleaners now start work at 5.00am, an hour earlier than anywhere else in the borough, to ensure the streets are cleaned before the morning commute starts. The money has also paid for a later collection of trade waste and flytipping with a truck now visiting the area at 7.00pm each evening.

This additional work is already delivering good results and the cleanliness of the area has perceptibly improved.

Nevertheless, I am aware that litter and dumping is still evident later in the evening and overnight. I'm determined to make Rye Lane even cleaner. To this end I met with a sustainable services representative on site on 9 October at 8.00pm in order to assess the situation and see what more the council can do to improve matters still further.

19. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON (DULWICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Would the leader support in principle a new Dulwich police station in any redevelopment of the current Lordship Lane site via a Section 106/community infrastructure levy (CIL) agreement?

RESPONSE

It is vitally important that the police retains an infrastructure that enables our diverse communities the ability to both report crime and anti-social behaviour. We

will continue to press the police to provide the facilities that are needed to ensure this happens.

The council has extended the offer of working with the police and the Mayor's office for policing and crime to provide adequate replacements for those police stations that are set to be closed and we are willing to look at every feasible option. Fundamental to any such proposal, however, is the willingness of the police to take up our offer.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

Following the introduction of the tables and chairs policy, please can the cabinet member give me details of 1) the amount of money that has been generated so far; 2) what that money is to be spent on; 3) what enforcement action has been taken to date against businesses who continue to obstruct the pavements without licenses for their A boards, tables and/or drinkers?

RESPONSE

In the current financial year to date the following income has been raised from tables and chair and other street furniture licences:

- Tables and chairs - £10,125
- Street furniture licences - £6,375.

This income pays for the management and administration of the service and enforcement of the licences.

Since the approval of the tables and chairs individual cabinet member decision, we have visited a large number of businesses and discussed and agreed what items would be allowable. We have also followed up with removal notices around the borough including Bermondsey and Borough Market and on two occasions have carried out removals. In line with the policy we treat every case of enforcement on its own merits. We also have current plans to tackle further areas with studies now taking place on several key areas including Rye Lane and Lordship Lane.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

When the cabinet published their council plan, the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling set a target for the percentage of streets and highways with unacceptable litter at 4% and detritus at 9% for each of the next three years. In the council plan performance report 2011/12, the cabinet member then changed the target for litter to 7% and detritus to 10%. Why has the cabinet member changed the target? Does he think it is transparent and acceptable to change a three year target after one year because he has failed to meet it?

RESPONSE

In the last two years Southwark's budget has been cut by £90 million in real-terms, the largest cash-terms reduction of any council budget in London in this round of cuts and largest ever reduction to our budget. The cuts were of such an extent

that no service area could be protected entirely from budget reductions. Street cleaning was no exception.

Despite budget reductions, the street cleansing team fundamentally reconfigured the way they worked to keep the streets of Southwark clean and mitigate the impact on the service they provide. However, it would be unrealistic to imagine that there would be no impact and that the service will be able to achieve the same standard as before the government cuts. The new targets transparently reflect a challenging, but realistic level of performance that will still meet the expectations of Southwark residents. This is reflected in the fact that resident satisfaction with our street cleaning is currently at 92% - the highest ever result.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK

Residents on the Rockingham Estate have raised with me a recent increase in flytipping. What is the council doing to tackle flytipping on the Rockingham Estate? How many cases of flytipping have been reported within the last year and how does this compare with the previous year?

RESPONSE

The table below sets out the number of flytips reported on the Rockingham Estate in the previous two years:

Period	Warden Reports	Resident Reports	Total
Oct 2010 – Sept 2011	11	1	12
Oct 2011 – Sept 2012	70	4	74

As can be seen from the data above, although the number of reported flytips has increased, the vast majority have been reported by our wardens. This means that they are doing their job and ensuring environmental issues are passed to our cleaning service before the public have to get involved.

For the record, flytip and bulky waste is pro-actively collected from the Rockingham Estate by the cleaning service every day of the week (Monday to Saturday) and upon receipt of a request from the public on Sunday.

All flytips collected are subject to a rigorous checking procedure to ensure that as much of the material as possible is recycled.

The published performance target is for the cleaning service to remove 97.5% of all reported flytips within 24 hours. Current performance exceeds this target with 98.6% collected in the specified time.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Can the cabinet member update me on the progress of the tree warden scheme? Please can he specify what their role will be and will they also be instructed to monitor the salt in the tree pits in order to ensure that trees are not unnecessarily killed by the laying of salt on the pavements?

RESPONSE

The council tree strategy, currently out for comment, contains a commitment to establish a tree warden scheme in the borough.

Officers have met with the Tree Council who run tree warden schemes and the London Tree Officers Association to determine the level of interest in Southwark and some 20 volunteers have been identified as potential wardens.

The tree team manager will also be meeting with Islington officers to discuss the implementation of their programme and use their knowledge and experience to deliver a programme in Southwark.

We will be looking to ensure that we have borough-wide network by March 2013.

The wardens will work closely with highways, parks and housing officers through a series of meetings, training days and conferences. The main role of the wardens will be:

- To become tree champions for their area. (In other words they will liaise with local residents on tree works being undertaken by the council)
- To assist in the care of young tree maintenance to ensure the newly planted trees get established
- To be additional eyes and ears for the council on damage to trees.

Council staff responsible for pavement gritting have all received guidance and training with regard to the correct procedure for the spreading of grit on pavements as part of the winter service plan. In addition, staff who carry out gritting operations only use mechanical spreaders which prevents the over-application of grit that has in the past been responsible for damage to street trees.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

What is the council doing to deter landlords from flytipping on Trident Street in Surrey Docks ward?

RESPONSE

Trident Street is routinely checked for dumped waste by the street cleaning service on alternate days. In addition any dumped waste reported via the customer service centre is required to be collected within 24 hours. For the period April to August of this year 99% of fly-tip removal requests across the borough were cleared within the 24 hour response time.

Our environmental enforcement team report that their work in this area can be summarised as:

- April 2012. Incident of building waste which had been placed out by a builder working adjacent to Trident Street. Builder was waiting the arrival of a waste vehicle to remove. Waste was removed in 45 minutes
- Problems in the area seem to be irregular and occur once per quarter at this location.

If the member for Surrey Docks Ward has any further information about the perpetrators of these breaches, could she please notify the sustainable services division who will appropriately follow up.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

What is the council doing to stop the Tesco Express on Southwark Park Road using the pavement as an extension to their store and why are their delivery lorries permitted to block the traffic thoroughfare rather than use the parking bays on a regular basis?

RESPONSE

The parking bay was installed for the purpose of providing car parking for visitors to local stores. The dimensions of the bay are unsuitable for accommodation of large delivery vehicles although there is not a loading ban in operation in this area.

Observations have shown that vehicles making deliveries to the store are too large to fit wholly within the parking bay. Delivery vehicles then extend onto the double yellow lines or, if the parking bay is occupied by a car, double park. This is causing obstruction of the westbound traffic lane. Currently this can only be dealt with by issuing parking tickets on the vehicles causing the obstruction.

Tesco's transport consultants have indicated that they would be prepared to pay for a five metre west-ward extension of bay and changing its use so that only delivery vehicles can park in it during certain hours (8am-11am) and by shoppers outside of those hours. It is noted that the extension of the bay would only be possible with the removal of the adjacent plane tree and approximately five metres of footway.

A proposal will be brought to the local community council for a decision within the next three months.

Regarding the cages on the footway, we have brought the issue to the notice of the store manager and will continue to inspect the area and take enforcement action when we find evidence of an obstruction on the highway.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

How will the recent court ruling that co-mingling has not met the EU directive impact on Southwark's recycling services?

RESPONSE

It is not the case that commingling has not met the European Union (EU) directive. Both the EU, in guidance published in June this year, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in their amendments to the Waste Regulations 2011 (brought into law at the start of October) clearly state that commingled collections are compliant with the Waste Framework Directive provided they can achieve the same aims of high quality recycling as a source-separated collection system.

In dense urban authorities such as our own, with a large variety of housing types and a very high proportion of medium and high rise developments, a uniform, commingled collection service absolutely presents the best solution for the needs of the council and more importantly our residents. This is why our new state-of-the-art materials recycling facility is built to process commingled recycling and to produce the highest possible quality of separated recyclate for re-processing.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

The most recent officers report into Grange Road indicated the road was in a state of disrepair and in need of resurfacing. Is the cabinet member for environment willing to prioritise the resurfacing of Grange Road in the 2013/14 programme?

RESPONSE

We have recently agreed to a £45 million investment for highways infrastructure assets to fund a 10 year programme of carriageway and footway resurfacing and officers are currently preparing the annual programme for 2013/14 for approval.

The selection for renewal of footway or carriageways for inclusion in the programme is primarily based on an annual condition survey. This survey identifies the 100 worst roads in terms of condition which are then scored and ranked based on the following criteria:

- Survey condition rating
- Condition assessment based on engineers' inspections
- Cost of reactive repairs over the past two years
- Functional importance of the road
- Delivery risk.

Surveys following recent urgent works to deal with a number of potholes and sunken areas, predominantly around the utility boxes, show that Grange Road is in need of resurfacing.

Therefore, Grange Road is likely to feature in the forthcoming programme and I will ask officers to bring the report on the 2013/13 programme to me for a decision as soon as possible.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

How many employees have participated in the council's cycle to work scheme since it was launched? Please provide a breakdown by financial year.

RESPONSE

For the years for which we have records, the number of employees for each given year participating in the bikes to work scheme is as follows:

Summary of Bike Scheme Participants	
Scheme Run	Number of employees joining scheme
July 2007	25
January 2008	36
July 2008	41
February 2009	41
July 2009	80
February 2010	39
August 2010	40
Total	302

29. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR DAN GARFIELD

What measures is he undertaking to improve recycling on Southwark's housing estates?

RESPONSE

We are well aware that making recycling easy for people who live in flats and on estates is a challenge. We have therefore put significant effort into making sure we have a really strong recycling infrastructure on our estates.

We already have the most comprehensive housing estate recycling service in the country but we are doing and will continue to do more.

A number of measures are in place to ensure that housing estates are able to recycle their waste material:

- An easy to use door-to-door collection service, tailored for medium and high-rise households, serving over 44,000 properties
- 1,400 accessible 'bring' sites in the borough, including in parks, schools, and on estates
- Communal recycling bins are provided wherever possible to residents living in flats
- Commingled recycling services
- Garden waste recycling collections and community composting schemes are now on offer where feasible and we also recycle as much bulky and fly-tipped waste as possible.

I am delighted that this autumn we will be adding to these measures by extending our food waste recycling service to another 4,000 households, mostly on estates.

But even more than this we want to properly understand what the barriers to recycling are for tenants and residents on our estates. So we have spent the first six months of this financial year carrying out in-depth surveys. Information from our collection crews, feedback from tenant and resident associations and many individuals has been gathered and analysed. This information will inform the

marketing and communication work we have planned for the second half of the year, specifically aimed at our residents living on housing estates.

The initiative will also include house to house visits, and over the next 18 months we aim to visit every household eligible for the clear bag recycling scheme to promote the recycling service.

We will also be engaging with residents' groups and using our mobile recycling centre, which is a specially designed truck, externally funded to promote recycling of specific items like batteries, textiles and small electrical items.

Further work will be undertaken to thank residents for taking part.

We are starting this campaign this autumn and concentrating in the first phase on some of the areas where we know that recycling has not been reaching levels that we might reasonably expect.

30. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

What is the council doing to improve cyclists' safety on Southwark streets?

RESPONSE

Joint working with Southwark Cyclists

The council has established a cycling joint steering group with Southwark Cyclists to work together to increase the level of cycling and reduce road dangers; making cycling safer. Supporting this, a working group was established to discuss and review various cycling related highways/traffic improvement projects.

In the last year, we have commissioned a detailed survey of the authority's roads and motorised vehicle free paths to assess the skill level needed to cycle on them in relative safety. These are classified using a system based on the three core levels of the National Standard for Cycle Training (Bikeability). This information along with input from the cycling working group has developed a programme of schemes to increase permeability for cyclists across the borough e.g. contra flows and cycle 'cut throughs'. Incidentally, the interactive Bikeability maps are available for use on the Southwark website.

Physical works

The permeability schemes for cyclists have been developed in consultation with the working group consisting of public realm officers and members of Southwark Cyclists. It has identified 20 locations where improvements for cyclists are being followed up for planned implementation in 2013/14.

Other major initiatives that the council are developing include the Greenlink programme at Salisbury Row to Burgess Park, Greendale from East Dulwich Grove to Denmark Hill/Champion Hill, and in Camberwell, (access improvements to Burgess Park). The Connect 2 programme will also deliver a significant off road facility for cyclists in South Bermondsey.

I am happy to note that Southwark was the first London borough to install 'Trixi' mirrors. These mirrors can make it easier for lorry and bus drivers to check for cyclists who may be in the blind spot on the left hand side of their vehicles.

The junctions where Trixi mirrors have been installed are:

- Junction of Denmark Hill / Coldharbour Lane / Daneville Rd / Milkwell Yard
- Junction of Ilderton Road / Surrey Canal Road
- Junction of Rotherhithe New Road / Ilderton Road
- Junction of Croxted Road / Park Hall Road / South Croxted Road.

A further eight junctions are planned to receive the mirrors by March 2013.

Awareness events

The council offers free cyclist training to anyone that lives, works or is educated in the borough with around 900 children and 600 adults receiving training each year.

HGVs and cycling

Currently, under the planning applications process we require construction management plans at application stage on large developments. Through these we seek Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS), membership from contractors and require that drivers have undertaken a Drivers' Certificate of Professional Competence course which includes cyclist awareness/safety training.

We offer one day safer urban driving courses in Southwark. This is a Drivers Certificate Professional Competence (DCPC) training course which is available free of charge to any professional larger goods vehicle driver who drives in Southwark. This accredited course includes practical on road cycle training and will count for seven of 35 hours DCPC that all professional lorry drivers need to complete by September 2014.

The council continues to run the Exchanging Places programme and events. Where cyclists have the chance to sit in a lorry driver's cab to see where they need to be on the road in order to stay safe. At these events, cyclists also have the chance to receive expert cycle safety advice from the police and road safety officers.

Enforcement days

We have also recently held two cycling awareness and enforcement days on 26 and 27 September in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Team. The purpose was to raise awareness and reduce the number of road traffic collisions, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable road users safety, which involved identifying and warning those cyclists about the risks of jumping traffic lights as well as making very clear the implications to those drivers who entered the advanced stop lines (ASLs) junction area, which are supposed to be reserved for cyclists.

A number of spot checks at undisclosed locations will also be taking place in the future, where if need be on-the-spot fines will be issued.

31. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL SITU

What impact will the Southwark heat network have on carbon emissions and air quality?

RESPONSE

I am delighted we are getting close to being able to sign a contract for the delivery of the Southwark heat network. Some 25 years after it was built, the South East London combined heat and power plant will finally be generating useable, low carbon heat for the benefit of Southwark residents.

Not only will the cost of heat be significantly lower than the cost of heating using the existing gas boilers, but residents will have greater security of energy supply and there will be major environmental benefits. The project will save 8,000 to 10,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions every year, and it will cut nitrous oxides emissions by two tonnes per year. So the project will deliver a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality and provide cheaper heating and hot water to our tenants and leaseholders.

32. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Does the council still supply rose bushes and gardens for estates? How much money is allocated for each estate?

RESPONSE

The council maintains existing landscaping areas and will replace plants/bushes as and when required.

In regards to new requests for landscaped areas or planting, each request will be considered on an individual basis. Specific funding is not provided for 'new landscaping,' however, limited funding may be available from existing budgets if there is surplus available.

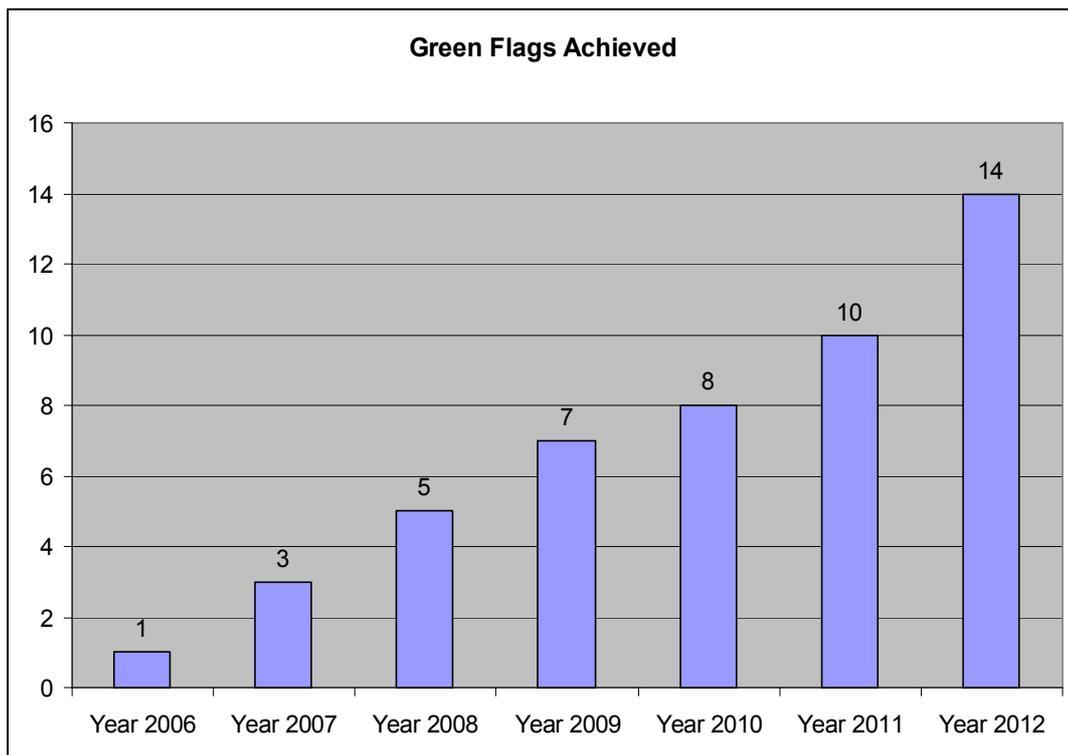
Depending upon the scale/size of the request we will always work towards a positive response to a request if the resource is available.

33. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN HAYES

How many of Southwark's parks received Green Flag awards this year? How many received the awards in the previous five years?

RESPONSE

The record number of Green Flags awards received by our parks this year is a tremendous achievement.



I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in the awards and visiting a number of the 14 parks that were awarded this year as part of the acknowledgement and celebration of their status.

Fourteen of our parks have won this prestigious award:

- Southwark Park - 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Dulwich Park - 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Bermondsey Spa Gardens - 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Sunray Gardens - 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Peckham Rye Park - 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Russia Dock Woodland - 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Paterson Park - 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Brimmington Park - 2010, 2011, 2012
- St Mary Frobisher - 2011, 2012
- Brunswick Park - 2011, 2012
- Geraldine Mary Harmsworth - 2012
- Leathermarket Gardens - 2012
- Nunhead Cemetery - 2012
- Warwick Gardens – 2012.

I am grateful for the efforts of the park management team, Friends of Park groups and parks and gardening staff from Quadron and other stakeholders that have worked to preserve the status of our parks despite a backdrop of severe financial constraints.

34. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Can the cabinet member explaining the delay in consulting residents on the tree management strategy adopted in 2010 with a one year review window? Will he commit to ensuring that the revised strategy gives increased priority to replacement tree planting and young tree maintenance (currently a low priority, band 3 of 4 bands)? Can he assure residents of Reverdy Road that tree-pits made vacant as a result of council felling, which the residents intend to plant up, will not be dug up by council staff - as was recently the case in Trinity Street?

RESPONSE

The draft tree management strategy was adopted in December 2010 with an undertaking to review any comments received within one year of implementation. By December 2011 very few comments had been received and a final document was being prepared. However earlier this year following the implementation of the proactive approach to tree management contained in the strategy a number of concerns regarding the changed focus were raised by residents and I decided to delay producing the final strategy and undertake further consultation so the community had another opportunity to inform the strategy.

The consultation on the tree management strategy will be completed by the end of October 2012. The consultation will inform the priorities for the revised strategy.

There is no disagreement about the importance of maintaining the numbers of strong and healthy trees across the borough. To achieve this, we also need to have introduced good maintenance and a programme of tree planting. However, the removal of trees that pose a threat to personal safety must be our most urgent priority.

All trees on Reverdy Road will be replaced in the upcoming planting season. This will be incorporated with a wider programme of footpath renewal works. Residents are currently being consulted on preferred species and will be finalised by end of October with works undertaken by March 2013.

35. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

Given the high exposure of Southwark residents to aircraft movements, would the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling please set out the principles on which the council will base its responses to consultations about issues of aircraft noise, additional airport capacity in the London area and changes to night take-offs and landings?

RESPONSE

The government has released its draft Aviation Policy Framework for consultation. In previous consultation there was little comment requested by the government in respect of noise. This consultation addresses this and has a more focussed look at aviation noise issues.

Southwark's principle is to pursue policies that best protect the residents of Southwark from excessive aircraft noise. To help achieve this we believe that the

impact of aviation noise requires an up to date and independent study, the last comprehensive study having been completed in 1985. We also believe that noise level contours (the acceptable average daytime noise over a 16 hour period) should be reviewed and based on community annoyance, which is a concept developed and recommended by the World Health Organisation.

One of our principles is for the government to improve transparency and regulation. We recommend that airports that have large volumes of traffic and/or passenger movements should be designated and subject to more rigorous regulation; for example if traffic numbers are exceeded then they should be subject to a penalty scheme. These same airports should maintain and operate noise monitors to produce noise measurement reports.

The closing date for consultation on the draft Aviation Policy Framework is 31 October 2012. SSW is already working with London Councils as part of a London wide response. The same principles would apply in any government consultation on airport capacity or aircraft noise.

36. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

What is the most recent estimate of the number of empty homes in the borough, and how often are such figures collected?

RESPONSE

The most recent estimate for the total numbers of empty homes in the borough as of November 2011 is 2,679. The breakdown is as follows:

- Private sector - 1,881
- Council owned empties - 603
- Housing association empties - 195
- Other public bodies - 0.

With regeneration schemes taking place in various parts of the borough on the Aylesbury, Maydew, Lakanal and Elmington Estates, it is very difficult to be as accurate as we would like as void figures include properties being used for temporary accommodation, or awaiting void disposal.

We also have 173 active voids in various stages of preparation for re-let. This figure understandably changes on a daily basis as they become available.

The figures are collected throughout the year and recorded on the council tax base form, which is submitted during October.

37. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

How many council homes have been a) sold as voids and b) sold through right to buy, since 2011 to date (broken down in years)?

RESPONSE

- a) In the 2011/12 financial year 56 void properties were sold. In the first two quarters of the current year (2012/13) 16 voids have been sold.
- b) Below is a list of council homes which have been sold through right to buy since 2011 to date:
 - 1 January 2011 to 31 March 2011 - 3
 - 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 - 24
 - 1 April 2012 to 4 October 2012 - 22.

The increase in discount from £16,000 to £75,000 in April is yet another Tory red herring. It will increase numbers on the housing list increasing the length of time spent on it, with fewer council properties available to residents. A recent survey in the publication Inside Housing revealed that only one in 25 families who would like to purchase their homes have done so. The current right to buy scheme is another false dawn from government, devoid of thought or consequence.

38. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

How long are the current times for registering for housing and for medical assessments with the medical assessment department of Southwark Council's housing services department?

RESPONSE

The target for completing medical assessments is 10 working days and the medical assessment service is now on track with this. There was however a historical backlog caused by a change of staff but this has now been resolved.

There are occasions when the nursing officer has to request further information from GPs/hospitals, and depending on how quickly a response is received, this can delay the outcome of an assessment, but we aim to make a decision within four weeks.

Registrations

Registration officers are expected to input applications on system within five working days. At this point the applicant is asked to respond with their documents. Home visits to verify overcrowding, for example, are to be booked within five working days. A senior assessment officer needs to authorise visit results, check eligibility and add additional persons, all within five working days. Registration officers create a priority list within five working days.

We are currently awaiting the statistics for September. In August there were 391 applications received.

Median figures

- Registration of application where no verification is required - seven days (96% registered within 5 working days - and 45% of these on same day).

- Registration of application where verification is required - 35 days (applicant has up to 28 days to provide necessary documents).
- Registration where verification and home visit required - 59 days (applicant has up to 28 days to provide necessary documents; the visiting officer is available to visit an applicant within 5 working days, however some applicants are not available within this period and require more notice).

39. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL BUKOLA

Please can the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing management provide the average time for a void property to be re-let for a) 2010/11 and b) 2011/12? What process is used to check the quality of these refurbishments?

RESPONSE

The average re-let time for void properties has fallen considerably in the last few years saving the council a significant amount of money in regards to void loss. Average re-let times for 2012/13 are projected to improve upon last year and be in the region of 24 to 25 days by year end.

Year	Average Re-let Time
2006/07	111 days
2007/08	85 days
2008/09	53 days
2009/10	36 days
2010/11	26 days
2011/12	26 days
2012/13	24-25 days (projected)

The overall quality of the void is improving and each property is post inspected to help ensure that the void standard is attained. Revised satisfaction testing is being introduced to ensure we get better feedback from new tenants about their experience of the service and also property condition.

Satisfaction with the whole letting process has increased in 2012/13 to 87% compared to 81% in 2011/12 and 72% in 2010/11, demonstrating continuous improvement and significant progress.

40. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR NICK DOLEZAL

What impact does he believe the government's housing benefit cap and introduction of "affordable" rents at 80% of market rent will have on promoting mixed and sustainable communities in Southwark?

RESPONSE

The double whammy of the government's impending housing benefit cap and introduction of "affordable" rents at up to 80% of market rents will have a significant impact on the promotion of mixed and sustainable communities in Southwark. The

combination of changes will make some areas of the borough potentially unaffordable and no-go to households on benefits.

The introduction of housing benefits caps from 1 April 2013 will mean there will be a limit on the maximum amount of benefits working age households can claim. This will be targeted on non-working households but also affecting some part-time workers. The cap will be £350 per week for single people without children and £500 per week for all others, including couples, lone parents and couples with children.

Based on the current data available, around 527 existing claimants are currently projected to be affected by the cap. The projected annual loss of housing benefit by postcode as a result of the cap is set out in the table below:

Postcode	Number of claimants	Average loss by postcode
SE1	61	£3,033
SE11	8	£2,366
SE14	2	£5,928
SE15	173	£4,189
SE16	71	£3,445
SE17	58	£2,971
SE19	5	£3,944
SE21	14	£3,674
SE22	44	£5,188
SE23	6	£2,852
SE24	7	£3,036
SE26	2	£8,211
SE5	74	£3,633
SE8	1	£5,388

The welfare benefit cap is most likely to have the greatest impact on larger family households, i.e. those with four or more children.

The full impact of the introduction of the “affordable” rent product for new build has yet to be seen. A small number of housing association re-lets of the “affordable” rent product have taken place in the last year.

41. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES

What is he doing to ensure Southwark estates have adequate CCTV coverage?

RESPONSE

CCTV is a valuable asset in crime prevention and anti social behaviour, but also provides reassurance for local residents in the areas that they live. The council has embarked on an ambitious programme of improvements to the CCTV assets across the borough, including our own housing estates. Cabinet agreed the capital bid for £1.4 million in September 2012.

This will be used to upgrade the camera systems on estates where it currently exists, and install new systems on the Four Squares Estate where crime analysis

and anti-social behaviour indicates that CCTV would be a valuable long term investment.

Alongside the upgrade are 30 redeployable cameras for other estates such as the Aylesbury, which can be relocated swiftly in response to emerging evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour.

This investment will provide the most comprehensive CCTV coverage on our housing estates that Southwark has ever seen, whilst ensuring that we use CCTV in an efficient and effective way.

The programme will commence in early 2013 and will build on the improvements to our digital CCTV control, developing our ability to transmit images captured on camera directly to the upgraded CCTV control room using a combination of microwave and radio waves from a greater number of locations. The new control room went live in June of this year and has already supported police in making 258 arrests.

42. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

Please can the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing management publish the total number of outstanding repair jobs left by Morrisons (including those defaulted to other contractors) on termination of their contract in the south of the borough at the end of September and processes for dealing with any backlog?

RESPONSE

At the end of the contract with Morrison on 2 October 2012 there were no jobs outstanding. During demobilisation of the Morrison contract the council put in place robust transitional arrangements to ensure that jobs were managed effectively and passed to back up contractors and Southwark building services (SBS) where necessary. Tough action was also taken on jobs that were of a poor quality or overdue.

To illustrate the point, over the last 12 months 2,858 default notices were served on Morrison and the work passed to back up contractors. Of these, 1,412 were served in the period from July 2012 to 2 October 2012, nearly 50%. A large proportion of this work was passed to and completed by SBS. Since 3 October 2012 all new work has been passed onto Mears.