

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**(ORDINARY)**

**WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL 2011**

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**1. QUESTION FROM TONY OSBORNE TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Should all the contents of a stage 1 complaint letter when escalated to stage 2 be responded to by the stage 2 investigator in accordance with council procedures? If they are not and there is no supporting statement for the stage 1 responses is the investigation considered to be completed?

**RESPONSE**

When a stage 1 complaint is escalated to stage 2, it is allocated to a complaints investigator. They will look into the details of that particular case, including speaking to officers involved, reviewing the correspondence and speaking/corresponding with the complainant. They will then produce a stage 2 outcome which is sent to the complainant, indicating if the complaint is upheld/not upheld or partially upheld. The letter will also cover if compensation is payable and if further actions are required, for example repairs to be completed.

The stage 2 investigator will normally respond to the issues from the stage 1 complaint, plus any further issues that the customer raises when requesting a stage 2 complaint. However each complaint is different and it may be that the investigator does not cover all the issues from the stage 1 complaint because they have already been resolved, or the customer wishes the investigator to concentrate on a particular area.

If the complainant does not agree with the stage 2 outcome they can escalate to stage 3, and eventually to the Local Government Ombudsman who are independent of the council.

**2. QUESTION FROM MICK BARNARD TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

If an offer of half the market rent for a monthly renewable lease was made on a commercial property, unoccupied for 2 years, with a view to full market rent lease within 18 months would Southwark Property be justified in refusing the offer given the requirements of "best consideration"?

**RESPONSE**

Any offer received for a council commercial property to let is based on the prospective tenant being willing and able to meet their obligations under a lease. In the hypothetical question posed we would look at the prospective tenant and their abilities to meet obligations elsewhere. Typically a bank reference and other landlords' reference would be helpful. Where this could not be satisfactorily demonstrated we would decline the offer.

### **3. QUESTION FROM COLIN HARTRIDGE-PRICE TO THE LEADER**

There has been considerable opposition from local residents to a 9/11 memorial (its correct description) in the Potters Fields Park. How will you make sure the council does not ignore the views of local residents?

#### **RESPONSE**

The 9/11 London project proposed to install a work of public art on Potters Fields Park, to act as a focus for an educational programme to educate young people about the events of 9/11, not a memorial.

The council has facilitated a consultation on this proposal so that local residents have the opportunity to make their feelings and opinions clear. Following this consultation the 9/11 London project has agreed to hold further consultation.

### **4. QUESTION FROM BARRY MASON TO THE LEADER**

The Southwark Connect 2 project to turn the disused railway bridge by South Bermondsey station into an east-west walking/cycling route that will help regenerate the area, is now formally "at risk". The £600,000 Big Lottery grant will be lost. What is the council doing to ensure this project proceeds?

#### **RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING**

The council is not responsible for this delay. The facts are that the land ownership is not with the council and negotiating with land owners for them to give up rights and allow people to pass over their land is a complex negotiation, especially when there is no possibility of purchasing that land. Our officers have sought to get resolution of the issues over access with Network Rail and the other private land owners. This land is either side of a redundant railway bridge over Rotherhithe New Road.

Officers and the Connect 2 Steering Group are working hard to deliver the Connect2 project. The key issues for resolution are negotiation over access to Network Rail and other private land either side of the redundant railway bridge over Rotherhithe New Road.

Officers continue to negotiate with Network Rail in conjunction with partners, Sustrans. We still await formal confirmation by Network Rail of their acceptance of our land take requirements, which will enable legal agreements to be signed. It is disappointing that this has taken so long and risks delaying the project.

We believe we are very close to signing an agreement if the partners in this agreement hold to their intentions; and we believe that they will.

Renewal, the development company responsible for the Millwall Football Ground area regeneration, are also keen on a possible extension of the scheme to include a South Bermondsey Station cycle link to Bolina Road. To explore more fully this exciting proposal, I am attending a meeting at the Sustrans office with representatives from Renewal on 14 April 2011.

Meanwhile Network Rail has approved access to their site to enable the preliminary works (land/ecological surveys and due-diligence investigation), which will inform the detail design. These works are due to be completed by Monday 11 April 2011.

On the western side of the bridge, the Directors of Gainsborough Court who own the land have agreed in principle to the project and associated proposals. In the meantime further negotiations are on hold pending formal confirmation from Network Rail that their part of the land will be released to the Council.

All other parts of the project are progressing according to the agreed project timetable.

Those who are coming forward to campaign with the council should also be encouraged to talk to their local MP about Network Rail's role.

**5. QUESTION FROM PETER SALTER TO THE LEADER**

The "Southwark Connect 2" project to bring a railway bridge into use as a walking and cycling route is "at risk". This project would provide valuable amenity. If the Big Lottery grant is lost, can Southwark Council ensure the project proceeds?

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**6. QUESTION FROM JOHN FRANKS TO THE LEADER**

Due to lack of progress of the Southwark Connect 2 scheme this has been identified as 'at risk' by Sustrans. This means that the £600,000 this Big Lottery grant could be lost. What is the council doing to ensure that the scheme goes ahead?

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**7. QUESTION FROM STEPHEN HILL TO THE LEADER**

The Southwark Connect 2 project to turn the disused railway bridge by South Bermondsey station into an east-west walking/cycling route that will help regenerate the area, is now formally "at risk". The £600,000 Big Lottery grant will be lost. What is the council doing to ensure this project proceeds?

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**8. QUESTION FROM ANN WARREN TO THE LEADER**

The very popular Southwark Connect 2 project to turn the disused railway bridge by South Bermondsey station into a walking and cycling route is now formally "at risk". The £600,000 Big Lottery grant will be lost. Will the council

ensure this project goes ahead?

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**9. QUESTION FROM IAN MCPHERSON TO THE LEADER**

The 'Connect 2' project converting a disused railway bridge at South Bermondsey into a walking and cycling route is now reportedly 'at risk'. How will the council ensure that this project goes ahead, as it would be a travesty if the £600,000 Big Lottery grant for this scheme was lost?

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**10. QUESTION FROM SALLY EVA TO THE LEADER**

There is £600,000 of Lottery funding to be spent on the Southwark Connect-2 project. This could soon be lost. What is being done to spend this urgently? The scheme is to turn the unused railway bridge by South Bermondsey Station into a walking and cycling route.

**RESPONSE**

Please see the answer to question 4 above.

**11. QUESTION FROM JULIAN GRIFFITHS-SEARLE TO THE LEADER**

By her direct interventions to assist the 9-11 London Project Team achieve their goal to install a memorial on Potters Field Park, did the Chief Executive of Southwark act in an appropriate way?

**RESPONSE**

Yes. The chief executive consulted with both Councillor Stanton when he was the leader and with me when I became leader. The 9/11 London project proposed to install a work of public art on Potters Fields Park, to act as a focus for an educational programme to educate young people about the events of 9/11, not a memorial. We facilitated a consultation on this proposal, following which the 9/11 London project has agreed to hold further consultation.