

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 4 APRIL 2011

MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME – THEMED

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

Does the leader agree that climate change is the biggest threat to the future of Southwark? What is he doing about it?

RESPONSE

Climate change remains a significant threat to the world and to Southwark, particularly given its proximity to the Thames. As an administration we have taken steps to reduce the amount of green houses gases that are emitted from Southwark by:

- Introducing a trial of food waste recycling so less of our waste goes to landfill where it releases methane or for incineration which has carbon dioxide as a bi-product
- Hoping to introduce increased parking charges for second and third vehicles and emissions-based charging
- Reducing the total emissions of the council estate by a combination of behavioural change, accommodation rationalisation and energy efficiency measures that pay for themselves within five years by virtue of reduced energy bills.
- Remaining committed to a net zero carbon development at the Elephant
- Exploring the viability of piping currently wasted heat from the SELCHP incinerator to heat homes on five estates in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Does the leader agree that the future of children in Newington ward is enriched by the Brandon Library? Will he commit to keeping this library open?

RESPONSE

The library review will be completed later this year and will include consultation sessions at libraries and community councils. My colleague Councillor Ward would welcome any proposals any member has for bringing down the cost of library provision that helps to protect the service.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

Does the leader agree a brand new shopping centre should be the future of Elephant and Castle? Does he wish this had been included in the regeneration agreement which he signed?

RESPONSE

The regeneration of the Elephant and Castle is vital to the future of Southwark as a whole, and the urban regeneration of our borough, not just in Elephant but across Southwark, and is a key part of how we can meet the challenge of rising unemployment and falling public sector spending.

With regeneration comes jobs, not just short-term construction jobs, but new medium-term jobs down the supply chain and long-term opportunities as part of a revitalised local economy.

With regeneration also comes planning gain for improvements to local infrastructure, meaning that while other parts of the country will see their opportunity to invest in capital reduced or curtailed in future years, Southwark has the opportunity to harness Section 106.

It is more important now than it has been for a generation or more that we harness the opportunity that Southwark has as a central London borough and make it work for local communities. That's why I'm proud of the progress that we've already made on the regeneration at Elephant and elsewhere and why I am always excited to hear about how we can further harness regeneration opportunities to work for local people.

We must face facts: competition for private sector investment will be fierce over the next few years, but we have a unique opportunity to attract investment to Southwark and we can't afford to pass it up.

On the specific of the shopping centre, provision was included in the Lend Lease agreement in the event that progress on collaborative working was not possible. I am delighted at the progress that has actually been made in this regard and I look forward to having that progress reported to Cabinet shortly.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK

Does the leader agree that sports facilities are vital to the future of young people on the Tabard Estate? Will he ensure that local residents have first preference use of the Tabard Astro Turf during school holidays?

RESPONSE

Opportunities to take part in sport and outdoor activities are vital for young people across the borough, to help ensure that they live healthy and active lifestyles. There are opportunities for the council in community activism in maintaining outdoor space, as evidenced by the interest in and success of guerrilla gardening and I would be interested in any ideas that any member might have in how the council can facilitate this.

My understanding is that the existing allocation regime for the Tabard Astro Turf was set up under the previous administration. I also understand that there are a number of priority places for local residents of the Tabard Estate, and that the demands of people who live in the immediate area must be weighed against the needs of people from across the borough.

The astro turf at Tabard Gardens is reserved solely for use of residents at weekends.

Recently we have introduced a new system for booking at Tabard Gardens which only allow teams to block book a quarter in advance. Letters are sent to the teams on a quarterly basis. This allows us to ensure that there is suitable provision for resident use, and that certain teams are not monopolising the courts.

We do not have a specific school holiday policy, however during the summer months the bookings decline so there is increased access for local people.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

Does the leader agree that the future of Cathedrals ward will be enhanced by better enforcement of the licensing saturation policy? What will he do about this?

RESPONSE

There will be a growing challenge in future years to make sure that all aspects of community safety are enforced, as the council and police face much tighter times financially. We must look at how the council can work more closely with businesses and local people to change the way we approach localised problems and it is all of our responsibility to subject our intellect and imagination to how we can go about this change.

This position applies to concerns around the current level of alcohol related crime and disorder that are reported within Cathedrals ward. The challenges provided by the increasing prominence of the area and additional footfall, particularly within the late night economy, are recognised and will be a matter for consideration by the council and its partners. As an example of this I am pleased to confirm that a multi-agency Night-Time Economy Team will commence operation in and around the area this month. Southwark is one of a handful of councils to offer this unique way of working.

On the specific issues around the local saturation policy, it should be recognised that the special policy is only one tool available to the council to try and control the cumulative impacts of late night licensed premises in the area. It is not a vehicle by which the council may retrospectively take decisions on licensed premises nor refuse to consider applications for new or varied licences. The policy provides a subtle change within the legal basis for considering applications, which helps ensure that new businesses understand local concerns around crime and disorder and nuisance and give these full and proper consideration within their business proposals. Members will be aware, that this authority currently has three special policy areas, centred around identified current 'hotspot' activity and these all contribute toward our efforts to ensure our late night town centres provide a safe and enjoyable leisure environment. Members will note that a proposal to extend the current Borough and Bankside saturation policy area is contained elsewhere on today's agenda.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Does the leader agree that squash courts should be part of the future of the Elephant and Castle?

RESPONSE

High quality leisure facilities are absolutely vital for local communities to stay fit and healthy. Whilst I'm pleased with the progress that we've made towards delivering a leisure centre for the Elephant we are currently faced by a significant challenge, particularly in terms of the capital that we have to invest in improving facilities such as Seven Islands. There is a genuine opportunity for us to be innovative about looking for new investment in these facilities and I hope that members will come forward with ideas on this as part of the debate.

It may not be possible to provide a squash court at the Elephant and Castle, but we continue to look for ways that this may be possible.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

Does the leader believe that increasing affordable housing is important for the future in Riverside ward?

RESPONSE

Over 14,000 people are currently on the housing waiting list and thousands of tenants live in homes that aren't warm, dry or safe, so investment in new and existing affordable housing

across the borough is vitally important. One innovative approach that we have been pursuing to see more funds for us to invest in housing locally is commuted sums, which would unlock large amounts of finance and give us the flexibility to invest it where it will deliver the highest return. I would welcome any ideas that any other member would have for finding additional funding for this in their ward or elsewhere in the borough.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Does the leader believe that Southwark residents should have a genuine say about the future of their borough? How will he achieve this outside of allowing them to ask a few questions at this meeting?

RESPONSE

I do. That's why we are looking to change the way we conduct consultation as a council so that we are genuinely finding answers with local people. Residents have already had the opportunity to take part in the most open budget setting process ever, and I hope that over the next few months the debate about how we change our relationship with local people will also be taken out to the community.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

Does the leader believe that devolving more budget decisions to community councils would improve the future of Southwark?

RESPONSE

I look forward to the recommendations of the next stage of the democracy commission on the future of community councils.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL BUKOLA

How does the leader expect residents to genuinely question him about the future of Southwark when their questions have to be submitted before they have heard him speak?

RESPONSE

Public questions are an opportunity for local residents to come and share ideas or ask whether we could do things differently. That is possible through individual's own experiences of the way the council works at the moment and through their reflection on how it might act differently.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Does the leader finally accept that a new school is needed for the future of the young people in the north of the borough? Does he regret his scrutiny interview answer when he refused to look again at the figures?

RESPONSE

Please see the answer to question 15 on the main members' questions paper.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Will the leader put party politics aside to work with the Liberal Democrats in securing a new school in SE16 for the future of our young people?

RESPONSE

Please see the answer to question 15 on the main members' questions paper.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

What is the leader doing to prevent EDF ruining the future of Southwark Park?

RESPONSE

The work in Southwark Park is essential to prevent power cuts in London. It will mean that EDF use a small part of the park for two years at most. We will be working with EDF to make sure that local residents are disrupted by the work as little as possible.

On the contrary to ruining the future of the park there is the potential for new funding to secure an improved future for the park if we cooperate with EDF.

14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

Does the leader believe that the old Scott Lidget school site is a good suggestion for the future of a new school in SE16?

RESPONSE

Please see the answer to question 15 on the main members' questions paper.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Does the leader maintain that putting money into the council's contingency funds is better for the future of Southwark than supporting the Pumphouse Museum and Surrey Docks Farm?

RESPONSE

The budget has already been set and this debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

The council received a two year settlement. It would have been irresponsible to set a budget which ignored the fact that we expect to be hit by considerable cuts again in two years' time. That is why we set a budget which put money aside for those future expected government cuts.

16. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

Does the leader maintain that putting money into the council's contingency funds is better for the future of Southwark than supporting the Ellen Brown Children's Centre?

RESPONSE

The budget has already been set and this debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

The council received a two year settlement. It would have been irresponsible to set a budget which ignored the fact that we expect to be hit by considerable cuts again in two years' time.

That is why we set a budget which put money aside for those future expected government cuts.

17. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

Does the leader maintain that putting money into the council's contingency funds is better for the future of Southwark than supporting the Holmhurst Centre?

RESPONSE

The budget has already been set and this debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

The council received a two year settlement. It would have been irresponsible to set a budget which ignored the fact that we expect to be hit by considerable cuts again in two years' time. That is why we set a budget which put money aside for those future expected government cuts.

18. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Does the leader maintain that spending money on an Olympic quango is better for the future of Southwark's children than supporting the much loved community games?

RESPONSE

Southwark Council does not make financial contributions to the only Olympic quango, the Olympics Delivery Authority.

The council's delivery board and legacy group are delivered within existing budgets.

19. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

Lewisham and Greenwich successfully made the case for the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Woolwich Arsenal. Will the leader enhance the future of Camberwell and sustainable transport by doing the same for the Bakerloo Line?

RESPONSE

I would welcome any decision to finish the 1947 extension of the Bakerloo Line to Camberwell.

20. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Does the leader believe that continuing the services of a local one stop shop is important for the future of Bermondsey?

RESPONSE

One stop shops provide a useful face-to-face opportunity for people to come and speak to the council.

There are important questions to be asked about how the council interacts with local people in the future. Moves towards online interaction provide excellent opportunities for a more efficient service and reducing costs, but there is also the danger of excluding the poorest in our community. While a more diverse range of options for contacting the council means that

people have a wider range of choice and are more able to interact with us as their preference dictates there are potentially heavy costs of retaining means of contact that only a few people use. My personal opinion is that face-to-face contact will always remain important, but I welcome other members' thoughts on this question.

On the specifics of the Bermondsey One Stop Shop, the previous administration took the decision to sell off the land it is currently situated on.

21. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Does the leader maintain that putting money into the council's contingency funds is better for the future of Southwark than keeping our streets clean?

RESPONSE

The budget has already been set and this debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

The council received a two year settlement. It would have been irresponsible to set a budget which ignored the fact that we expect to be hit by considerable cuts again in two years' time. That is why we set a budget which put money aside for those future expected government cuts.

22. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

How much has the leader managed to save by cutting consultants and communications? Has this been enough to fund the future of universal free school meals as he promised?

RESPONSE

This question is about a decision taken in the budget, which has already been set. This debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

Covering the cost of free, healthy school meals entirely by cutting consultants and communications was not one of the administration's commitments.

Spending on consultants in 2010/11 was £6,361,591 compared to £10,124,161 in 2009/10.

23. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Does the leader have any evidence that universal free school meals have any direct impact on childhood obesity (and therefore the future of their health)? Please can he quote exact sources of research?

RESPONSE

"School meals can also contribute towards helping to reduce obesity in children, teaching them about making good food choices as part of their education."

Sarah Teather MP, Minister of State for Children and Families, Winter 2011 issue of *School Caterer*.

24. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Does the leader accept that day centres were treated appallingly and will he commit to their survival as part of the future of Southwark?

RESPONSE

This question is about a decision taken in the budget, which has already been set. This debate should be about looking forward to consider how we can work with the community to provide services that we can no longer afford to deliver directly.

There is an ongoing consultation with daycare centres and while we know that we cannot afford to continue to give the same level of funding to the centres. We have provided the cushion fund to help give these centres the breathing space to find alternative funding streams.