

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL 2011

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – THEMED QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION FROM JANE SALMON TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

How does the leader expect residents to ask genuine questions about his vision for the Future of Southwark when public questions have to be submitted before they have heard his presentation?

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.

2. QUESTION FROM MAUREEN BAKER TO THE LEADER

We in the Peckham community council area strongly believe in the advantages of 'learning from each other'. Therefore, what are the council doing to encourage all ethnic minority groups and the wider community to collaborate with each other and fully engage in community cohesion in the future?

RESPONSE

The community engagement work that the council does has been nationally recognised as best practice and we are committed to ensuring that this continues as a fundamental part of our vision for Southwark. The council's role in building cohesive communities cuts right across everything we do and every service we deliver. Our vision for Southwark recognises that Southwark's strength is its people. The huge diversity of the borough is a great strength and brings with it an array of amazing talents. We recognise that the starting point for cohesive communities is unlocking people's talents. Too many of our people have not been able to access the employment and social opportunities that living in the heart of London should offer. This is unfair. Realising that potential, with nobody left behind, is what we are about as a council.

This is underpinned by empathy, openness and trust. This has not been a borough where cultures have clashed, and we want to see it continue to be a place where by coming together Southwark residents create a unique sense of community. Part of this means the council and everyone who works in it showing residents' true compassion and the same care and consideration that we show members of our own families. We work with a huge range of partners and in a wide range of ways to make sure that people trust one another and trust us to act fairly.

The community councils and other forums that the council works with have a role to play in this as places where local people come together to discuss local issues, share common concerns and arrive at solutions together. We all recognise that it is best practice to broaden the base and attendance of all our meetings. We have been exchanging ideas from all community councils on how to do this and I hope that the second phase of the democracy commission will be able to point to ways of broadening and engaging as many people from our communities as possible.

The range of partners we work with is extensive, local residents, the police, schools, faith groups, local businesses and of course the voluntary and community sector have a key role.

Community events and activities such as Koruso the community choir, the recent very successful launch of the LGBT History Month at Tooley Street, as well as a range of other community events provide the opportunity for residents and communities to share and learn from each other.

We are also encouraging communities to submit applications for street parties, including The Big Lunch on Sunday 5 June 2011, which is another opportunity for communities to collaborate and encourage cohesion.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM MAUREEN BAKER TO THE LEADER

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor, my name is Maureen Baker and I am here tonight as a resident living in the Peckham Community Council area. We in the Peckham Community Council area strongly believe in the advantages of learning from each other. It is an idea, because there is so many different languages spoke all around London and all over the world now, there is lots of council estate where tenants are living next door to one another cannot communicate as they do not speak the same language. My solution is that we should take this to the faith groups, tenants' associations, schools and set up little groups where we can learn one another's different languages to take this forward for the future. Only a small range of languages obviously, we cannot cover the whole lot.

RESPONSE

Thanks very much, I think that is a brilliant idea and I think that is a real community initiative which I would be interested in taking forward. Thank you for that; yes certainly that will be part of one of the community thoughts that will be taken away this evening, thank you very much.

And can I say thank you very much indeed for coming along and staying and listening to the start of this debate and hope you stay a little longer, unlike some of the Liberal Democrat councillors who could not be bothered to stay for the first ten minutes of this debate.