

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**(ORDINARY MEETING)**

**TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2011**

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

How do you justify an SEN transport policy that prevents disabled children attending after school clubs when the savings made using the services of a charity status organisation rather than home carers will more than offset any additional cost of transporting them from school to the club of their choice.

**RESPONSE**

Southwark has a duty to provide travel assistance for eligible children to enable them to get to and from school during term time to access their curriculum activity. This duty does not automatically extend to after school provision. Neither the current school travel policy 2011 nor the previous home to school travel policy made provision for transport to and from after school activities - any request for this type of journey would be considered as an exception at the council's discretion.

The cost of short breaks provision varies because of a number of variables, including the child's needs, the facility used, and the skills and experience of the carer. The average hourly cost of a carer in the family home is around £15.50. The hourly cost of an after school or holiday provision for a group of children with mild or moderate disabilities can be as low as £10 per hour. Some children have high cost daily packages because they have high assessed needs. These costs would remain high wherever the children were being provided with support. There would therefore be no obvious savings arising from using a voluntary sector provider as these children are assessed as having high needs. By supporting these children with more complex needs in the community, we can prevent them entering care which is more expensive than supporting them at home with their families.

We seek to deliver best value for money, and must always balance cost with quality. We pay no more than market prices for the required type and quality of provision that children with complex needs require. This includes the cost of transporting children where needed.

**2. QUESTION FROM VICKY NAISH TO THE LEADER**

Could you list the grounds on which a deputation request can be rejected in addition to those listed under council assembly procedure rules page 119 paragraph 4 of the constitution and indicate in which council document each of the reasons for rejection can be found.

**RESPONSE**

There are no grounds other than those listed in rule 2.6 on deputations.

**3. QUESTION FROM MS K SMART TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Can the cabinet member for equalities please me inform if there were community consultations prior to Southwark Human Right Equality Bureau (S.H.R.E.B) being reconstructed by Southwark Law Centre and Southwark Citizen Advice Centre?

**RESPONSE**

The council carried out a mapping exercise of existing services and produced a consultation document for the future delivery of equalities and human rights services in the borough. The document contained a consultation timetable. The council invited the community's preferred options for the delivery of these services; as well as calling for initial proposals for how they might best be delivered. The council's communications office announced the consultation through a press release on 16 March 2010 and the document was posted on the council's website.

Following the press release the consultation document was extensively presented at a number of voluntary and community sector forums and also comprehensively distributed through community networks. A number of community organisations formally responded to the consultation. Their views were taken into account in the development of the specification for the new service.