

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2011

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS¹

Resident 1

I love Peckham because of its location in relation to the centre of London. It's just a good vibe.

Areas like this get stigmatised and it's outrageous. The rioting hasn't helped but that's just one blot caused by people with no sense of place and no sense of themselves.

Resident 2

It's hard to believe there was all this rioting here. Now it looks as if nothing happened. Everything is back to normal, and that's because the vast majority of people here are good citizens who just want to live and let live.

Resident 3

We don't live here – we just come for the shopping. But we'd like to live here. It's a lot more peaceful than other places.

I like to sit here in Peckham Square and watch the world go by. You see all of human life – so much diversity with people just getting on with their lives.

Resident 4

The media has a lot to answer for too. They've victimised areas like this by blowing things out of all proportion. I don't know if they set out to do this but they like to cause maximum damage with one bad news story.

It's scandalous how this area has been portrayed. I love Peckham because of its people, and together we've been fighting all this stereotyping for too long.

Resident 5

Only Fools and Horses didn't help....for 25 years a mainstream television programme reinforced over and over again that Peckham is a place where

¹ This paper documents a series of "vox-pop" interviews undertaken with Southwark residents – largely in the Peckham area – following the August disturbances. It forms part of the regular programme of pre-assembly outreach work conducted by community engagement. These views have been collected separately to the ongoing community conversations launched after the August disturbances by the Leader of the council.

people are up to no good. People think it's just a bit of fun, but it's not funny when you're living here in 2011 and you know that the reality is completely different.

Resident 6

It's all very well having all these shops but if people don't have money that's when all the looting goes on. They see all these things and they can't afford them. It was a perfect opportunity and they took it.

Resident 7

I love this area and I do a lot of voluntary work in the community. We need to ask ourselves, what can we do to improve, to make things better? Especially for the children. We say that they're the future but we need to prove that by our actions because words are not enough on their own.

Resident 8

There's lots of really good stuff going on behind the scenes and there's plenty for people to do. That's how it is at the moment but I'm very worried about the cuts and how they're affecting things. Young people are the future and if you don't invest in them you'll reap what you sow.

I worry about the amount of young people who can't get jobs. They're living at home, trying not to graft off their parents all the time, but that's what they've got to do. They've no choice, and that's partly what leads to unrest among the young.

Resident 9

If only we could harness all the energy and planning that went into destroying things. We need to motivate people to build, not tear down – to give, not to take away.

There's a lack of hope at the moment. People have seen the banks and some politicians get away with murder. It has a cascading effect. This is no excuse for the lawlessness we've seen but we have to do something about it – to show from the top down that crime doesn't pay.

Resident 10

There's a group of people in society today with a different set of values. If they didn't, they wouldn't have done what they did. I heard 10 and 11 year olds queuing in a shop having a debate about it, saying that 'they didn't need to go and break things up. If you want to have an argument, have an argument but don't smash things up'. So you can't blame it all on young people.

Resident 11

Southwark is quite good at connecting communities, but when there's a crisis you need to re-stock and see what's going on – look at the lie of the land.

Collective responsibility – that's what it's all about. We're all in this together.

Resident 12

A lot of people feel angry and let down in this area. There's a lot of poverty and deprivation still. Then there's the culture of greed that we've ignored.

This is a way of connecting and re-uniting people again after the mayhem. It's turning back the tide, pushing back the darkness. People need to talk about what's happened and this is helping them to do that. It's a kind of talking therapy - Peckham-style.

Resident 13

They stole from shops, frightening behaviour towards normal citizens, destroying property that is important to the community.

It was opportunism - a way of stealing, taking stuff from electrical shops and other shops like the clothes shops, trainers and all that sort of thing.

Public relations are good, we live in a multi-cultural society in Peckham, and I think tolerance towards one another is important and respect for one another is important. I try my best to behave like this.

People need to use their conscience more. I try to get on with my neighbours and show kindness and show respect. I am interested in how we treat one another. I try to turn the other cheek and still forgive them.

Resident 14

An event like this is not reaching the young people, one of their problems is that they say we are not listening to them, and they want to have a voice, so I think setting up a youth council, a big event, where we invite them to come and have the debate amongst themselves. The discuss it and we feed that in to policies and procedures. We need to get them to talk by setting the stage, and let them debate it amongst themselves. Let them set up junior political parties amongst themselves. We will be able to penetrate the gangs, because they will want to be heard too. I don't know what their problems are, ask them.

Resident 15

I think that the youths should really change their mindset. The parents should really teach their children, teach them some moral values. They should not have so many rights. Because what I have noticed in this country is that the youths think that they can do anything, they are given too many rights and they don't know what to do with those rights, and they don't know what to do with those rights. I think parents and society as a whole should be strict on the

youths, we have to train our youths if we are to have a better nation in the future.

Resident 16

They smashed up shops, they looted them, and they set fire to places.

It happened because they killed a man in north London, and they wanted to get revenge, so they done it to shops.

Resident 17

The remote cause of the riots was a man shot at Tottenham, but it was the other side of London, so I don't see why there should be riots here and in Birmingham and the rest. It was uncalled for.

Resident 18

The cause of the rioting was social deprivation.

Resident 19

Some people have been blaming the parents. But there is no such thing as the average parent. Around here some parents are massively supportive of their children, and others just throw them out on the street.

Resident 20

I am not too sure what happened, what it was all over. Apparently it happened all over as well. It happened in Hove! So why?

Resident 21

It was over some boy that got shot by the police and people started rioting for no good reason. If you live in Peckham, why are you going to riot in your own area - it's dumb. Half the people that did it didn't even know why they were doing it.

It was all done by blackberry, by blackberry messenger being used to say, "Lets all meet up and riot".

Resident 22

It should be all monitored, including Facebook and so on. And with all the latest technology, everybody wants what everyone else has. Obviously they can't afford it, so they are just going to help themselves.

Resident 23

They were using the excuse that the police shot somebody to do some stealing, it was not good. That's not the way to protest, they should have done it in such a way so that the government will listen to them, without any violence or stuff like that. I think it wasn't appropriate.