

**SOUTHWARK COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**(ORDINARY MEETING)**

**WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2013**

**URGENT QUESTION**

**1. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MITCHELL**

Leaseholders on the Sydenham Hill Estate have just received actual service charge bills for 1012/13 with demands for payment of an additional £700. Included in the bills are increases in responsive repairs of 400%. Will the Leader request demands for payment are suspended until a full audit and investigation into the causes of these increases on the estate is carried out?

**RESPONSE**

I can confirm that an audit and investigation has taken place in regards to these charges but have asked officers to investigate any further complaints which the council receives. We have already done substantial amount of work on reviewing the responsive repairs breakdowns, including gathering photographic evidence where necessary. If there are further issues which leaseholders dispute then they should raise them with the council.

We will not be making any requests for payment until 31 days from the date of the amended 2012/13 actual letter (4 October 2013) which will expire on the 5 November 2013.

I understand that Councillor Andy Simmons and Councillor Helen Hayes organised a meeting last week for leaseholders on the Sydenham Hill estate to discuss the actual bills and that further meetings are planned to ensure that leaseholders have as much support as possible in this process.

**2. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI**

Will the Leader provide a list of all council land and property assets currently being considered for disposal, broken down by type (commercial, residential, etc)?

**RESPONSE**

The reason for urgency for this question was that disposal of Styles House has appeared on the November forward plan.

Styles House should not have appeared on the forward plan - this was an administrative error in the regeneration department. Initial discussions have taken place with a private developer, Development Securities, who have an option to acquire a derelict building adjacent to the estate. Development Securities proposed a jointly delivered scheme with the council that could deliver new council housing on the site. We have had discussions with the TRA and following their feedback, we have asked developers to look again at their proposals.

I am very sorry for any concern this has caused residents and have asked that everyone in Styles House is written to explaining the error and apologising for any concern that it has caused. I have also asked senior officers in the department to review the process of putting things on the forward plan to prevent mistakes like this happening in the future.

In answer to your specific question, the council does not hold a definitive list of property assets currently being considered for disposal, broken down by type (commercial, residential, etc).

Disposals are either identified through departmental service plans which identify property assets which are surplus to requirements, cabinet decisions for example the modernisation programme or from direct approaches from interested parties. Decisions to dispose are then referred to Cabinet if over the delegation limit as set in the constitution.

Disposals are a key part of the funding towards both the general capital programme and the housing investment programme - without them there we would not be able to fund new leisure centres, investment in parks or the warm dry safe programme. The level of disposals have not increased in recent years with around £30 - £35m raised per year for the last 10 years.