

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY  
(ORDINARY)**

**WEDNESDAY JULY 8 2009**

**MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

**1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN**

What guarantees has the leader sought from the preferred bidder regarding its ability to complete the Elephant & Castle scheme in the current economic climate?

**RESPONSE**

Councillor John is right to highlight the difficulties caused by the current recession. Property prices in London have fallen by 3.3%, in Southwark by 8.7% and in some London boroughs by up to 20% in the 12 months up to March 2009. The impact of the recession on the banking sector has resulted in severe restraints on finance for private sector developers.

Negotiations with the preferred bidder are, as Councillor John will appreciate, subject to commercial confidentiality but I can assure him that all the appropriate guarantees have been sought, at the highest levels, from our preferred bidder and that a report on progress towards a final agreement will be coming to the executive on the July 21 2009.

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN**

I thank the leader for his answer, but the point behind this question – and many of the other questions this evening about the Elephant & Castle – is of course the exclusivity agreement has now lapsed as at July 1. So I am slightly concerned he is not going to be able to apparently tell me anything of any significance before July 21 when the executive next meets; and there is no guarantee, I suppose, that the executive will have anything to discuss on July 21. How long is this period of indecision and dither going to go on?

**RESPONSE**

Mr Mayor, there is no period of indecision or dither. We made a decision to select Lend Lease as our preferred developer back in 2007 and since then we have had an exclusivity agreement to allow them to develop their proposals. They need to decide whether they are going to make proposals to us or not. They will have to decide within a very short time frame whether to proceed with any such proposals or whether to come up with a different plan. We obviously have not been able to develop an alternative plan during the time we were in that exclusivity agreement with lenders. I am confident that by the time of the executive meeting on July 21 there should be a clear way forward for the Elephant & Castle.

**2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JENNY JONES**

On Wednesday November 5 2008, council agreed to support the London living wage by paying all staff, including staff employed by contractors providing a

service on behalf of council, the London living wage. Council further agreed to promote the living wage more widely across the borough, including to the private sector. What steps has the council taken since that date to implement these commitments?

## **RESPONSE**

One of the first things I did as leader was to ensure that all staff working directly for the council are paid at or above the London Living Wage. With regard to staff working for contractors, we have received legal advice that we cannot make payment of the London Living Wage compulsory.

We are working with partners to promote the payment of a fair wage to all staff. In our recent bid to the government's Future Jobs Fund which, if successful, will provide match funding to create 112 new job opportunities for Southwark residents, we have successfully negotiated with partner organisations that they will pay industry standard wages above the national minimum wage.

However, as Councillor Jones will know, the only legally enforceable level of salary is the national minimum wage, and I would call on the government to make the London Living Wage a statutory minimum within London which it has so far failed to do.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JENNY JONES**

Thank you for your answer. If I were a less charitable person, I would say it lacks a certain energy in application. I would have thought that more might have been achieved in the time since the motion was passed. However, I agree the government definitely has a role in this and I think they ought to be ashamed for not already agreeing to the London living wage. Can I ask you, are you geared up to negotiate new contracts or renewed contracts with contractors? Actually say to them that it is part of a new contract that they must pay the London living wage to their employees, and secondly will you list all the contractors that the council currently does business with and who are not paying the London living wage to their employees?

## **RESPONSE**

Two points Mr Mayor – the first is as I understand it, but I am happy to clarify this point, you could have a clause that requires them to pay London weighting minimum wage but you would not be able to enforce it. I will check that point and clarify it but as I understand it that's the stumbling block. The second point is of course that the council has contracts and contractors who don't live in London, who don't live anywhere near London. Some of our housing benefit processing is done up north in Barrow-in-Furness, and presumably don't want contracts which have a London weighting minimum wage. So I take your point, but not all contracts are people who are Londoners or live or work anywhere near Southwark, so we just need to break it down slightly.

You would have thought that most decent employers would want to pay a London weighted minimum wage. You would have thought that that's the way things would work anyway. The easy way around this – the straightforward way around this, is for the government to introduce a London weighted minimum wage because that takes care of all the problems about contracts and enforceability and actually right now if you want to discuss stimulus, if you are wanting the lower paid

to have more cash in their pockets, that's a really easy way of doing it. There was a time last year I think when Ed Balls was saying they would not do a London weighting minimum wage because it was inflationary. Right now that's the least of our problems actually, with the economy, and you would have thought this would be a fairly cheap and easy thing for the government to do – particularly since to their credit they introduced the national minimum wage in the first place.

### **3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON**

Would the leader of the council tell us what discussions he has had with the Mayor of London about securing funding for the cross river tram?

#### **RESPONSE**

I met with Boris Johnson on June 16 where we discussed a number of issues including the Cross River Tram. Mayor Johnson is still very keen that the Tram is developed, although he has made it clear that Transport for London (TfL) is unable to provide funding.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Mayor agreed to write to Lord Adonis to ask him to consider funding the project. In light of the new high speed domestic services from St Pancras to destinations in East London and Kent, the argument for creating this vital additional link between South and North London is stronger than ever.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON**

Thank you, and I would like to thank the leader for his answer. I am delighted that we have started to make some progress in this area of the tram, particularly as the Mayor's of London's transport adviser recently said it was top of their projects that they would like to take to government. But I wonder whether you would also lobby Lord Adonis and ask to meet with him to present our strong case for cross river tram and possible links to high speed rail.

#### **RESPONSE**

Mr Mayor, I think it is very clear that Lord Adonis is extremely keen on developing the high speed rail link, and of course that has implications, particularly – if I understand Conservative party policy – that were to be developed instead of another runway at Heathrow. Clearly that might attract even more north-south traffic across London than is currently the case. We have, off the peg as it were, a costed business case fully routed scheme which would get people to and from Euston going across the river, relieving pressure on the Northern line which is already over-burdened, and I am more than happy to continue to do what we can to push this scheme. What is required for the scheme to happen is a big amount of capital to make it happen; it is only going to come from some level of government greater than Southwark and it is the kind of thing where we need to go after whatever funding opportunities are available.

### **4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE**

Can the leader provide the date by which he expects the agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will be signed?

## **RESPONSE**

Councillor Livingstone will be aware of the confidential nature of commercial negotiations to secure an agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant and Castle. I can assure him that every effort is being made to conclude the negotiations in a way that secures our vision for the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle and that a full report on progress towards an agreement will be made to the executive on July 21 2009.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE**

I would like to thank the leader for the response to my question. Can I ask the leader what personal lengths he has gone to in recent weeks to make sure the deal with bidders has been signed quickly and on favourable terms, and why did he find it more important last week to go to a conference in Harrogate for the July 1 deadline than stay behind to drive forward these discussions?

## **RESPONSE**

I have had a number of meetings with Lend Lease over the few past months, and senior officers have been in weekly meetings with them recently. We knew by July 1 that there was not going to be an offer on the table by then. We are still hopeful that we will have something to consider at the executive meeting on July 21, and I think it was appropriate for me to go to the Local Government Assembly in Harrogate where I rubbed shoulders with Steve Bullock from Lewisham, Steve Reid from Lambeth and indeed Fiona Colley from the London Borough of Southwark.

## **5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER**

Would the leader of the council care to reflect on the likely impact on the lives of people living in Southwark of the Labour government's mishandling of the economy, in particular the need for a £100 billion banking bail-out? In the light of this can he remind members of the steps that the council is taking to ensure that local businesses continue to thrive and bring new jobs and opportunities to our area?

## **RESPONSE**

The executive took the decision on May 19 2009 to help small businesses in this difficult economic climate. These actions include:

Promoting the small business rate relief scheme

- Instruct the Supply Southwark Group to develop and implement at the earliest opportunity a method to promote opportunities for Southwark businesses to supply to the council by advertising contracts locally, including a website section listing all council procurement opportunities between £5,000 and £75,000 which local businesses can bid for
- Make best endeavours to accelerate payments to suppliers by reducing the payment period from 30 days to 20 days
- Permit businesses that are commercial property tenants of the council to pay rents monthly in advance rather than quarterly, so that more money is retained in the cashflow of that business.

In addition to this, through the work of the economic and development team the council has allocated an additional £2m to commission local organisations to provide training and support to help an additional 760 people get jobs and help over 150 new businesses start, plus £200,000 to fund 24 apprenticeships within the council.

Furthermore, the uncertainty of the current economic climate and the likelihood of future controls over public spending will create some difficult issues for the continuity and provision of council services. While the efficiency programme remains at the heart of council priorities for containing costs and balancing the budget, continuing financial pressures, not least government grant, means that all front line services remain under continual scrutiny of costs and ways of working.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER**

Thank you, Mr Mayor. I thank the leader for his response and welcome the council's actions in trying to help those struggling to make ends meet, but would he agree with me that this job is made more difficult by the government knowingly causing hardship to low earners by their clumsy abolition of the 10% tax rate?

#### **RESPONSE**

Mr Mayor, as with the answer to Councillor Jenny Jones about the national minimum wage, I continue to be astounded at the cack-handed way in which the government has been dealing with some of the lower paid members of society. It doesn't appear to be terribly well thought through. I am certain that in Southwark there are people who have lost out due to the abolition of the 10% tax rate despite what the government says about the compensatory measures.

#### **6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON McGOVERN**

What alternative development proposals is the leader considering to improve the Elephant & Castle area, in case the current proposals cannot be progressed?

#### **RESPONSE**

Under the terms of the exclusivity agreement signed with the preferred bidder, as is normal practice in such commercial negotiations, the council undertook not to pursue any alternative proposals. A full report on progress towards a final agreement with the preferred bidder will be made to executive on July 21 2009.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON McGOVERN**

I would like to thank the leader for his answer. As it has been previously mentioned we understood that the exclusivity deal expired on July 1. Has it been extended and how long has it been extended for?

#### **RESPONSE**

No, Mr Mayor, the exclusivity agreement has not been extended and any such extension would have been a member decision. A report about the progress on the Elephant & Castle will be coming to the executive on July 21.

## **7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK**

What are the treasury's published projections about public spending and what are the implications for Southwark council's finances and services in the future?

### **RESPONSE**

Put simply the Treasury is planning 4.7% real growth in public spending between now and 2011. This will be followed by 0.1% real cuts for three years between 2011 and 2014 and bigger cuts thereafter.

However, under Labour, treasury projections are notoriously unreliable. Some might even accuse them of being spun for political advantage.

Whether this current spending is sustainable is highly questionable. The Treasury estimates a fall in GDP of 3.5% for 2009/10 with the economy marginally returning to growth in 2010/11. Given the economy contracted by 2.4% in the first quarter of 2009 alone (not 1.9% as 'published' by the Treasury) a longer and deeper recession is certainly putting more pressure on public services and making Labour's spending plans unachievable.

The implications for Southwark are clear, more unemployed people, more spending on benefits and social care and a lower tax base to pay for it.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK**

I thank the leader for his answer, and I would like to ask him – isn't it now clear that Labour's incompetent management of the nation's finances and failure to act against those fat cat bankers means that ordinary people such as public servants, teachers, soldiers etc. will actually be bearing the brunt of these public spending cuts, and should not the government now stop wasting money on things like ID cards, trident missiles and MPs' second homes and instead allow councils to build first homes for ordinary people in real need?

### **RESPONSE**

I would like to thank Councillor Capstick for placing the ball so carefully in front of the open goal. I am increasingly concerned, and will be speaking next week, about the implications of public spending cuts. I think it is clear that they are going to be large; I think it is clear that they are dreadful and I fear, looking at the recent history of national government, that local authority will get it in the neck more and before health, education and some other services. Let's be clear: we have just seen graphically the value of local government in this borough. When people talk about public services, when people talk about fat cat public sector employees and their fat cat pensions – final salary pensions – they are talking about the kind of people that we have just been paying tribute to in this chamber.

I think it is astonishing that the level of debt which we have run up to get us through this economic crisis is greater than the level of debt which we needed to run up to get through World War II. I think it is clear, as Nick Clegg has said, that repayment of that debt is going to be the dominant political issue for our generation. I think it is incumbent on all of us to make sure that the very real progress which has been made in places like Southwark, due in some part to the increased public spending which many of us argued and voted for, are kept up and

do not fall by the wayside because we need to start repaying the debt that has been incurred due to the wholesale failure to properly regulate the banking system in the western economy.

#### **8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL**

In the light of several unfair and undemocratic decisions taken by the tenants council, or the tenant fund management committee acting on the tenants council's behalf, will the leader of the council now take immediate steps to remedy the unintended consequences flowing from these decisions, to ensure that organisations like the Barry Road residents association who represent Southwark Council tenants and leaseholders including those in "street properties" [as distinct from those on estates] are able to:

- (i) obtain for their tenant members the share of the tenant fund (into which they have an obligation to pay) to which they are entitled and which they have a legitimate expectation of receiving, but of which at present they are being unreasonably deprived;
- (ii) fairly challenge the arbitrary and self-interested decisions taken at present by the tenants council, which are taken in the interests of a part only and not the whole population of tenants in Southwark;
- (iii) freely "operate under the terms of the constitution" which was given to them by Southwark Council, and not under the dictation of a Tenants Council whose aims and objectives are in conflict with that constitution.

#### **RESPONSE**

Barry Road Residents Association (BARA)'s application for tenant fund grant last year was unsuccessful as it was deemed not to have met the criteria for funding. BARA appealed unsuccessfully about the decision, first to the tenant fund management committee (TFMC), and then to Tenants Council. The appeal to Tenants Council was made at the September 1 2008 meeting. Following a careful and thorough discussion, the TFMC's decision not to fund BARA because it did not qualify for funding according to the current tenant fund criteria, was upheld. There is no evidence to suggest that either TFMC or Tenants Council were operating unconstitutionally.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL**

I would like to thank the leader for his thoughtful response, but I want to just reiterate. Although this is a local issue about which I have asked, it nevertheless has constitutional significance and wider implications. The Barry Road residents' association will never be able to meet the criteria, because it requires 70% of its tenant members to be estate tenants, which is simply a physical impossibility in the Barry Road area of Southwark covered by this association. May I encourage and ask – please would the leader review and amend those single executive decisions, and all other council's decisions, to try to achieve a fairer position.

#### **RESPONSE**

Mr Mayor, would that I had such constitutional powers. I don't think I do, but I will check and make sure that I inform Councillor Mitchell how it would be that the council would amend the current position were it minded to do so; then he can pursue that avenue.

**9. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE**

Does the executive member believe that any deal reached with Lend Lease for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will be as satisfactory for Southwark and Southwark residents as it would have been had it been concluded within the original timetable?

**RESPONSE**

Negotiations with the preferred bidder are subject to commercial confidentiality but a report on progress towards a final agreement will be coming to the executive on July 21 2009.

**SUPPLEMENT QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE**

Thank you Mr Mayor, and I would like to thank the deputy leader for his answer. In that the leader pirouettes beautifully around making any kind of statement on the Elephant & Castle, I would like to ask the deputy leader, judging by his very carefully worded answer, whether he is confident that there will not be a deal on the table on the July 21.

**RESPONSE**

I would like to thank Councillor Page for his supplemental. As the leader said, we are continuing discussions and I am hopeful, and indeed I would say a little confident, that we should have something that we will be able to say at that meeting in July.

**10. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD**

Does the executive member believe that the final agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will meet the council's aspirations for the number of socially affordable homes in the scheme?

**RESPONSE**

Yes.

**11. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR KIRSTY MCNEILL**

Is the executive member for housing able to re-iterate assurances that all residents required to move as a result of the Elephant & Castle regeneration schemes will be able to return to the area following the completion of the scheme?

**RESPONSE**

Yes.

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KIRSTY McNEILL**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to thank the executive member for his answer and ask when?



## **RESPONSE**

The position is exactly as previously been stated – any resident that wishes to return will be able to return to the Elephant and Castle. They will have the seven year right to return agreements, and those will be enforced and they will be able to return to those properties. As Councillor McNeill may be aware, we have made significant progress in terms of a number of the housing sites which will be getting significant funding from the HCA, and will have higher proportions of social housing. So in fact the difficulties that we have experienced in terms of the economy may actually lead to the fact that we might be able to find those rehousing opportunities for residents who want to return to the Elephant and Castle earlier than previously occurred, because there will be more sites on some of those that previously were going to have a smaller proportion of social housing. That could be a silver lining to this council, which I am sure you would be pleased with.

### **12. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY**

Despite his various assurances to tenants that he wouldn't scrap the tenant's arbitration process since he's been responsible for housing, can the executive member now confirm that he intends to scrap it?

## **RESPONSE**

We are strongly committed to maintaining the tenant's arbitration process; there is no suggestion that it should be 'scrapped'. As part of the tenancy agreement review we are looking at all clauses in the current agreement, including clause 25 which refers to the arbitration process.

I cannot envisage any circumstances under which this very effective remedy would be taken away, but I am interested in exploring whether it would sit more appropriately within the council's complaints procedure. This might benefit tenants by giving them a wider range of remedies at an earlier stage in the complaints process.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY**

Thank you Mr Mayor – I am grateful to the deputy leader for his answer, and I am partially reassured by the strength of his commitment. But just to absolutely reassure me, can he commit tonight that he is committed to the retention of an independent housing tribunal service within Southwark outside of the internal council procedures, and if he is committed to that, why he allowed a recommendation to scrap the tribunal service to go forward in current area forum consultations on the new tenancy agreement?

## **RESPONSE**

I thank Councillor Friary for his supplemental and can give some clarity on that. I understand that there may have been a suggestion that appeared at one point during these discussions – I can make it absolutely clear so that Councillor Friary has no confusion on this matter whatsoever – there is no intention of scrapping the arbitration service. We are committed to retain the arbitration service, and that is the position of the council.

**13. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY**

Does the executive member consider it feasible to structure major works contracts for low rise housing estates with a substantial number of leaseholders/freeholders so as to provide those owners with the opportunity, at their expense, to opt in to the contract, with the advantage that economies of scale and less disruption might be achieved in the interests of all concerned?

**RESPONSE**

It is feasible, the environment and housing department wish to pilot an 'opt-in' scheme this year, with a view to developing borough wide arrangements under the new major works partnering contracts starting on site in April 2010.

**14. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO**

Would the executive member for housing tell us what steps he has taken to ensure that new social housing is being developed in Southwark?

**RESPONSE**

The council has been active in its role of enabling housing development generally, and ensuring that appropriate levels of affordable housing are constructed as part of that development. Affordable housing includes homes developed for social rent as well as low cost home ownership and other types of intermediate housing.

The council has a target set by the Mayor of London, of 2,453 affordable homes in the years 2008-09 to 2010-11, and a local area agreement target of 2,215 in the same period.

A number of specific council activities are contributing to the delivery of affordable housing and meeting these targets. These include:

- Providing clarity for developers on the council's expectations in planning policies and associated documents. The Southwark Plan is currently the substantive document, but the production of the new core strategy is progressing
- Maintaining regular liaison with individual registered social landlords (RSLs) who develop in Southwark to discuss strategies and monitor progress
- Maintaining regular contact with the developing RSLs collectively through the cycle of meetings with the Southwark Housing Associations Group (SouHAG)
- Using the planning process to secure the delivery of appropriate levels of affordable housing relevant and all RSLs through section 106 agreements with developers
- Establishing a joint programme board with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to co-ordinate the various activities and schemes that will secure HCA funding and maximise the development potential in Southwark
- Developing a housing supply and demand database to contribute to the effective mapping / monitoring / and delivery over time, of those key elements of the council's 'sustainable community strategy' which will be integral to the Housing Strategy 2016

- Developing a new housing supply line through the hidden homes strategy;
- Expressing interest to the HCA for the challenge fund programme to build new council homes.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO**

I thank the executive member for his exhaustive response, and I welcome and appreciate his detailed explanation in regard to the activities of this council to the delivery of affordable housing and meeting the council's target; but wouldn't it be much better if the government simply allowed this council or local councils to build council houses again?

#### **RESPONSE**

Thank you, Councillor Blango, for the supplemental. In terms of answering this particular point, members of this chamber may be aware that some modest level of funding has been provided by the government for council housing. I think the initial figure was somewhere in the region of £100m; and certainly Southwark could easily take up the £100m in one fell swoop. I know other councils have that idea as well. I think we need to be realistic in terms of our allocation of that funding and accept the fact that it is unlikely that the government is going to give all of that money to one local authority. Having said that, we will be putting in a bid for the July round of funding. Members may have recalled when we had the debate at the Executive on the Elmington phase, when I mentioned that we were planning to do the Elmington, given the modest amounts of money at this stage that are available I don't think it is appropriate to do that with such a large scheme. However the schemes that we are potentially looking at where we will be applying to government for funding include Coopers Road Phase IV, Brayards Road, Ivydale Road (122-149), Gordons Road (155-161) and Athenlay Road (91-99).

#### **15. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI**

What progress is being made with demolition of Giles, Carton and Darnay House?

#### **RESPONSE**

The demolition of these blocks is scheduled for October 2009.

#### **16. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER**

What is the schedule for Southwark's acquired street properties to be brought up to Southwark decent homes standards?

#### **RESPONSE**

Housing management is now finalising a full stock condition survey which will cover the street property portfolio. Consultation will begin in July 2009, and the investment strategy reported to executive in October 2009. The new major works contracts are being let on an area by area basis, with a fifth 'area' covering street properties and voids. This will mean a more specialist approach to the renovation of street properties, and a better quality of service to residents.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER**

I would like to thank the executive member for his answer, and ask when he expects residents in East Dulwich to benefit from these major works?

#### **RESPONSE**

At the moment the council is undertaking a stock condition survey of its stock. We will be basing investments decisions within those major works contracts based on that stock condition survey. I am sure that properties within East Dulwich will be in that list but I do not have that details of that; but when they are available, I will be more than happy to make those available.

#### **17. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR MACKIE SHEIK**

Would the executive member for housing tell us what steps he has taken to update and improve the council's tenancy agreement?

#### **RESPONSE**

Our current tenancy agreement dates from 2002, much has changed in public policy since then, and our terms and conditions of tenancy are badly in need of updating.

The current review began in March 2009. Through this process we aim to capture legislative and policy changes, and with help and input from tenants produce a new and modern agreement. It is a lengthy and complex project, and one which we are managing with very valuable support from a tenants working party. Initial consultation with a wide range of agencies and from area forums identified many issues to be considering including:

- Recognition of civil partnerships
- Dog ownership and management
- Succession
- Noise nuisance and wooden floors

A full list of consultation issues and potential changes to the agreement is being worked up for distribution to tenants' representatives in late July. The consultation process will continue with a mail-out of prospective changes to all tenants in line with statutory requirements. We expect to take the final report on changes to full executive in December 2009.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR MACKIE SHEIK**

I thank the executive member for his answer, but can I ask – what ways will these changes improve relations on our estates and the services that tenants receive?

#### **RESPONSE**

I would like to thank Councillor Sheik for his question. I think some of the matters that I have raised are issues that have been raised with me as being important – in particular, recognition of civil partnerships, dog ownership and the management of that. Certainly the initial response, particularly in terms of the pilot that was running on the Aylesbury Estate, has shown that there has been considerable interest and actually making sure that the management of dogs is done properly

and certainly in terms of that we would expect – hoping to move to a situation where if you are a council tenant you would have your dog microchipped, and that would be a requirement within the tenancy agreement. Obviously, there is some discussion of succession and noise nuisance. I am sure many councillors get concerns raised to them about noisy neighbours upstairs because they have laminated flooring; and the ability to be able to do something in those situations and assure that there are particular standards put in place when laminate flooring is used so that actual proper muffling is in place – those are some of the issues that we are looking at, that we believe could actually improve relations between tenants and also with the council.

**18. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON**

Would the executive member for housing update us on the progress towards the digital switchover for tenants using communal antennae on council blocks?

**RESPONSE**

The digital switchover procurement strategy has been agreed, and is being progressed in line with the tight deadline of 2012 compliance. The government's agency for the national digital switchover, Digitaluk.co.uk, has accredited the Southwark switchover plan, giving a welcome vote of confidence to our challenging timetable.

We are now at procurement stage with EU notice and trade adverts due to go out shortly. We expect to attract a good shortlist of contractors based on the size of the Southwark project. Selection and appointment of contractors will take approximately 10 months to complete, the planned start date is April 2010. Completion before switch off of the analogue signal in early 2012 will be a contractual requirement.

Notices of intention have already been served on affected leaseholders with works to individual sites subject to a block by block survey.

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON**

I would like to thank the executive member for his answer and ask if he would agree to urge the contractors to visit elderly and vulnerable tenants to reassure them that their existing channels will carry on and introduce them to the new range of services as well?

**RESPONSE**

I am more than happy to report that when we have actually appointed the contractors to do that. I would stress that this is an absolutely imperative thing for the council to get sorted out. I have to say that if whoever is running the council in 2012 does not get this one sorted out it will be, I have to say, a very interesting scenario which is absolutely at the top of the priorities that this administration is going to do and we will get it sorted.

**19. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR MARY FOULKES**

What is the demographic profile of the staff who have left Southwark council from January 2008 to June 2009? Can these figures be broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and reason for leaving?

## RESPONSE

The figures we have available are for April 2008 to March 2009 for staff who have left employment with Southwark Council, by age, gender and ethnicity, and are as follows:

### Age

Reason for leaving	Percentage					Number
	16-24	25-39	40-49	50-64	65 and older	
Career Break	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	16
Deceased	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	2
Dismissal - Capability	0%	42%	17%	42%	0%	12
Dismissal	4%	38%	46%	13%	0%	24
Expiration of Contract	11%	65%	15%	9%	0%	65
Outsourced	0%	14%	43%	43%	0%	7
Redundancy	0%	21%	35%	40%	4%	52
Resignation	8%	53%	26%	13%	0%	387
Retirement Age	0%	0%	0%	57%	43%	35
Retirement Early	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	8
Retirement Ill Health	0%	7%	7%	86%	0%	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>622</b>

### Gender

Reason for leaving	Percentage		Number
	Female	Male	
Career Break	94%	6%	16
Deceased	0%	100%	2
Dismissal - Capability	33%	67%	12
Dismissal	38%	63%	24
Expiration of Contract	40%	60%	65
Outsourced	43%	57%	7
Redundancy	65%	35%	52
Resignation	60%	40%	387
Retirement Age	60%	40%	35
Retirement Early	38%	63%	8
Retirement Ill Health	50%	50%	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>622</b>

### Ethnicity

Reason for leaving	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Not Stated	Number
Career Break	13%	31%	6%	13%	38%	0%	16
Deceased	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	2
Dismissal - Capability	0%	33%	8%	8%	50%	0%	12
Dismissal	4%	46%	0%	8%	38%	4%	24

Reason for leaving	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Not Stated	Number
Expiration of Contract	2%	54%	2%	2%	34%	8%	65
Outsourced	0%	29%	0%	14%	57%	0%	7
Redundancy	4%	42%	0%	2%	50%	2%	52
Resignation	3%	33%	3%	3%	57%	2%	387
Retirement Age	3%	11%	0%	3%	83%	0%	35
Retirement Early	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	8
Retirement Ill Health	0%	29%	0%	0%	71%	0%	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>622</b>

Data for quarters can be extracted; but we have not had time to do so before council assembly. Furthermore, figures for quarters can be misleading and so annual data is most reliable. I would be happy to work with the member to provide further information when it is available.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR MARY FOLKES**

Thank you very much for your comprehensive answer. What I would like to know is do you know what the ethnic breakdown of Southwark staff is, and the reason I ask that is because when I look at things like redundancy it looks like 42% of the people who are made redundant are black and I don't know if that is proportional to the amount of staff in Southwark Council, so do you know what that figure is?

#### **RESPONSE**

Thank you very much for your supplemental question, Councillor Folkes. In actual fact this question has been provided for me by Councillor McNally because although obviously all equalities and diversities issues come under me, human resources come under him. I don't know all the exact figures from the top of my head but I am more than happy to work with my colleague, Councillor McNally and provide you with an answer to that.

#### **20. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU**

At the last council assembly when we had the opportunity to ask questions, the executive member said that the council's policy is that frontline staff and managerial staff, approximately 3,000 members of staff, complete equalities and diversity training, but did not say how many of those members of staff have actually completed the training. How many members of staff have completed equalities and diversity training?

#### **RESPONSE**

Up to April 2009 we have trained 2,050 members of staff in equality and diversity and this number is continuing to increase. This is broken down as follows:

Grade	Number of people
Staff	1,649
Managers	308

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
Senior manager (grade 14+)	93
Total	2,050

We should reach our target of training 3,000 employees by the end of this financial year.

Moreover, we have recently changed our training, saving money and improving its relevance, and will continue to assess how we provide staff with the skills they need in equality and diversity. In September we will be improving our induction process: continuing to stress that equality and diversity is an essential component of the work of the council. Furthermore, all staff must demonstrate their knowledge of and commitment to equality and diversity when they apply for their job.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU**

I would like to thank the executive member for her answer, but I do have a small supplementary question. If equality and diversity is essential and relevant to council contractors – if so how does the council monitor contractors' consciousness of equality and diversity?

#### **RESPONSE**

Thank you Councillor Situ for your supplementary question. Again, I don't deal directly with contractors, again that would be a function that falls to my colleague Councillor McNally. It is not a question that we can answer for you now, but we can certainly make some enquiries and get back to you with an answer.

#### **21. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES GURLING**

Following the resignation of Hazel Blears, the secretary of state for communities, and the shelving of the government's community empowerment bill, what affect will this have on our efforts to strengthen community empowerment in Southwark?

#### **RESPONSE**

Whilst the resignation of Hazel Blears and the subsequent appointment of John Denham may lead to a shift in emphasis of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) approach to community empowerment, it will have little or no effect on the council's approach to community empowerment.

Southwark Council has long been committed to engaging with local communities and is recognised for its efforts in this area by, for example, being awarded Beacon Status for Cohesive and Resilient Communities and being one of the eighteen local authorities that make up the Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA), recently co-hosting a high-profile NEA conference. Much of the Communities in Control White Paper - and the legislation which is now following it - is about spreading the sort of best practice that Southwark Council is acknowledged as being at the forefront of.



Although DCLG's Community Empowerment Bill has now been shelved, work continues in Southwark looking at whether our current community empowerment strategies are sufficient, or whether we need to develop a new community empowerment strategy. For example, the council's community involvement and development unit (CIDU) works closely with a range of local community groups and aims to deliver effective partnership working with local residents, communities of interest, voluntary and faith groups, and other organisations with a role to play in social regeneration. We also seek to empower local people by giving them opportunities to influence spending on local services, through the cleaner greener safer fund, the community fund and the tenant's fund to name but a few examples. The eight community councils, which were created in 2002, provide local people with a forum to engage in their wider community and to discuss issues with their local ward councillors. This approach is focused on enabling people to influence local decision-making and to increase community cohesion, ensuring that our community empowerment activities are focused on improving outcomes for local communities.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES GURLING**

Thank you Mr Mayor – thanks to the executive member for the answer. I am very pleased of course to see the passing from power of Hazel Blair has no effect on the borough; I am sure all sides of the chamber see that. My specific concern is, will you commit to enhancing the role of community council, and in particular within that look at their role in receiving pre-application planning presentations for developments of large scale which wouldn't be suitable to be taken by community council as a planning committee, but nonetheless would benefit from the community involvement?

### **RESPONSE**

Yes, thank you Councillor Gurling for that supplemental question. I will be very happy to look into the possibilities as somebody who when I am not being an executive member has one of the busiest community council areas for planning and development in their ward. I think it is an excellent idea to bring pre-application planning applications and I would certainly talk to officers in both the planning department and community council support teams to see if we can make that happen.

### **22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI**

Can the executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities tell us what progress is being made in strengthening the powers of community councils?

### **RESPONSE**

Community councils provide a voice for local communities and the people within those communities. They allow the council to be more responsive to what people want. So we want to build on the good work of community councils; and recent or forthcoming developments include:

- we are considering allowing community councils to guide investment in local infrastructure by making recommendations for highways and street lighting improvements to the value of £100,000 and £75,000 respectively per

community council area in addition to the borough-wide highways capital programme

- asking community councils to identify their priorities for small scale capital projects for consideration under section 106 funding and other capital funding streams including cleaner greener safer and local implementation plan
- continuing the great work which has gone on in cleaner greener safer, letting people make important changes to their environment
- adopting the community councils protocol at the last council assembly, which aims to further define the roles and responsibilities of both officers and members
- plans to link in Southwark Youth Council with the new youth community councils, giving young people more influence in their local communities

I also meet regularly with chairs and vice-chairs and the relevant supporting officers to ensure that good practice and ideas are being shared between community councils.

I will continue to champion community councils and to support them as a key link between communities and the council.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI**

Thank you, Mr Mayor and the executive member for finding the time this afternoon to receive the Nigerian delegation that came to visit Southwark Council.

Going back to community council, does the executive member agree with me that community council are a group aligned with all sections of the community including young people and BME groups so they are closely involved in taking important decisions?

#### **RESPONSE**

I would like to thank Councillor Lasaki for his supplemental question. Yes, I do think that community councils are a good opportunity for engaging a whole range of members of the community. I refer to my answer about the youth community councils that are being set up alongside the main community councils. We also obviously recognise that public meetings are not desirable things for lots of people to go to, but we do have whole teams of people in social inclusion, councillors themselves, lots of people out there making sure that we do have good representation on the community councils and good attendance at community councils and the more we can do that, the more we can engage people, the more we can involve them in the decision-making.

#### **23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES**

In the light of the astonishing fiasco of 'talking' CCTV which was installed, never worked, and is now going to be ripped out again, all at a cost of £85,000, what measures is the executive member putting in place to ensure that the council properly considers the viability and value of similar initiatives before significant amounts of resources are expended upon them?

#### **RESPONSE**

We are currently working on a comprehensive CCTV strategy through which we will ensure that any CCTV solution is clearly linked to wider council objectives, be they crime prevention or income generation.

The decision on not spending more public money on the Talking CCTV system was made after careful consideration of the various options. The decision to not have the Talking CCTV system in the borough was made because it was clear that:

- Talking CCTV will not provide the interactive communication with the public originally considered
- The feedback from other local authorities is inconclusive as to the effectiveness of the project
- There is no capital budget currently set aside for the additional costs for this service these options would place additional budgetary pressures beyond the original grant funding from the Home Office.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES**

Mr Mayor, I would like to thank the executive member for her answer, if not for the contents contained in it. Can I ask the executive member the question that the Southwark News asked but were apparently ignored when they asked: why wasn't the scheme piloted in one place before the money was spent rolling it out across the borough?

#### **RESPONSE**

I am not quite sure why it wasn't done straight off, there were some complications at the beginning. But what we have to bear in mind is that this scheme was in a way put on us by the government, your government, who gave us the money, who hadn't looked into it properly, who didn't realise what a load of rubbish it was; and then when we found out what a crock we had been sold we decided, unlike the government and the banks where they just keep throwing the money at it, we thought we would be sort of prudent and pull out and not spend any more money.

#### **24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE ZULETA**

Will the executive member for community safety tell us what steps are being taken to reduce the threat from aggressive and dangerous dogs in the borough?

#### **RESPONSE**

We are committed to using all our possible powers to meet the very high levels of concern expressed by members of the public about aggressive and dangerous dogs. Examples of current activities include:

- Dog control orders being piloted on the Aylesbury Estate require dogs to be kept on leads at all times. The penalty if dogs are not on leads is a £50 on the spot fine and if successful will be rolled out in other areas of the borough. The order will come into force in August 2009.

- Educational events are planned to take place on Southwark's estates and in parks throughout the year with a focus on all dog issues including dog behaviour and dog control. This will include the ID chipping of dogs which enables stray dogs to be identified and returned to their owners. So far over 200 dogs in the borough have been chipped.
- Call centre staff have been asked to direct calls to police if a dangerous dog is reported and the council make a note of the call to assess whether there are any patterns emerging (police have the powers to deal with dangerous dogs).
- Dog chipping is being investigated as a potential tenancy condition as part of the review of the council's agreement. This initiative has been successfully introduced in neighbouring boroughs.

We believe this combination of actions using common law, statutory and contractual powers will raise awareness of the need to control dogs in public, and provide real incentives to responsible dog owners.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE ZULETA**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to thank Councillor Manchester for her answer, and also I would like to ask her what she is expecting to do in the future to reinforce our commitment to these actions – certainly in my ward there was a problem in a couple of buildings with youths with these dogs and the community wardens did some regular visits round there and managed to sort the problem out, but I would like to think that this was not just a one off – so can Councillor Manchester please tell me how you plan on continuing this kind of effort?

#### **RESPONSE**

Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am not sure if you have read the paper – we are actually doing a pilot scheme on the Aylesbury and the Heygate, where we are dealing very successfully with stray dogs – on the Aylesbury; it will be expanded to the Heygate shortly. Just because there aren't many people living there, that doesn't mean to say there aren't lots of dogs living there. So what we are trying to do, and this is turning out to be very successful, we chipped more dogs in the last sort of 6 months than this council has ever done before. We are having the wardens enforce any form of stray dogs or loose dogs and if they are found they are taken back to their owners where they receive a fine. So I think that answers your question.

#### **25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON**

Given the success of the recent Lost Southwark exhibition at the Cuming Museum, does the executive member have any further plans to exhibit the council's art collection?

#### **RESPONSE**

I am aware that there are many councillors, but particularly some from the Conservative Group, who have long held the view that residents of the borough have not in the past had as many opportunities as they might to view Southwark's

extensive art collection, and as I stated at the last council assembly this is something I wish to put right.

Southwark Council will hang pieces from the “Lost Southwark” exhibition dating from 1645 to 2007 at the new Tooley Street building once the Cuming exhibition closes in August. This will feature 40 works from collections arranged to depict the transformation of different parts of the borough, mostly completed by local artists.

Following some very positive feedback from local residents and civic societies I am keen to bring smaller exhibitions to different parts of the borough. Discussions are already underway about a “Lost Dulwich” exhibition, possibly at the next Dulwich Festival, and I am exploring the possibility of a similar exhibition in Camberwell Baths next year once the building has been refurbished. There will also be a display of works depicting Burgess Park and the environs at Chumleigh Gardens, with workshops. We are also in negotiation with the University of Arts about the development of a gallery space at the Elephant and Castle.

Contemporary works are used by South London Gallery as part of education projects, including the Double Take, where works were placed in schools, and this scheme will be repeated. The comprehensive Art in Class, teaching collection is available to be borrowed for Southwark schools and enables schools to borrow artworks and run curriculum-based activities inspired by the exhibition.

In late 2010, the works of Austin Spare (d.1959), from the collection, will be the basis of a larger exhibition at the Cuming Museum and the subject of an artist’s book. The Edwardian and Victorian wallpaper collections will then form the first exhibition of the De Morgan Foundation’s new museum in Kennington in 2010-11.

I am of the view that where council buildings are open to the public, there is an opportunity, providing conditions are suitable, to display art from our collection, or others, and maintain the reputation Southwark has as one of the leading boroughs for culture and the arts, improving the quality of life for our residents.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON**

Thank you, Mr Mayor. I would like to thank the executive member for his reply and I would like to ask, would it be possible to embark upon a re-hang of the art and the public spaces of the Town Hall in celebration of Lord Leyton’s 118<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the South London Gallery?

#### **RESPONSE**

Thank you Deputy Mayor, and as anyone who has visited the Conservative group room would know the Deputy Mayor is very interested in art if you have seen the installations in her office. I am more than happy to take her advice on, as I say in the last paragraph of my answer, in looking to display art in public buildings where it is suitable. I would be delighted if you would spend some time advising me on what we do with our art collection at Tooley Street.

#### **26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR JELIL LADIPO**

Can the executive member please tell me how Southwark will help celebrate the 175th anniversary of Surrey Gardens?

## **RESPONSE**

The idea to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Surrey Zoological Gardens arose from a discussion I had at the end of last year with Councillor Caroline Pidgeon and forms one of a series of events which are part of the council's "Lost Southwark" exhibition at the Cuming Museum, and the London Mayor's "Story of London". Since then both of us have been working with the local community to organise an event this summer to commemorate this little known piece of the borough's history.

There will be a celebratory event on Saturday July 25 from 12pm – 6pm at Pasley Park (the alternative name for Surrey Gardens). This event includes Victorian Tours of the area, led by a guide who will host visits to the Cuming Museum and Walworth Garden Farm.

Activities at Pasley Park will include a Victorian style walkabout, street performers, a town crier, Victorian zoetrope and shadow puppetry, heritage displays and activities about the zoo and Surrey Gardens history and a small Victorian funfair. Further, there will be animal themed workshops, such as giant lizards from London Zoo, Surrey Docks Farm and others. A performance will also be devised with active participation from the public and hopefully local councillors, that will recreate the zoo and gardens.

I hope that there will also be a permanent legacy project with an art piece created by local organisations who are working with us to improve and enhance the gardens, subject to a successful cleaner greener safer application.

Walworth Garden Farm is also working with three local schools on an exotic planting project using the plants that were popular in the Victorian era. This will include a display and interpretation board once these are planted.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JELIL LADIPO**

Thank you, Mr Mayor. I would like to thank the executive member for his response. The plants are absolutely fantastic. I would like to thank you and Councillor Pidgeon for all your work on this. Given that the Surrey Zoological Gardens was the first place in the country where giraffes roamed, will you ensure that the legacy includes historical hubs in the park as well as giraffe-inspired art works created with the local children?

## **RESPONSE**

Thank you, Councillor Ladipo. Some people say that the council actually is a weird and wonderful collection of creatures; and of course what many of us don't realise is that 175 years ago, there was a real life menagerie at Walworth Gardens which involved the first giraffes roaming in England. We were considering actually bringing a giraffe down but budget limitations in the department have prevented me from supplying a giraffe. However we will be asking the children to paint a giraffe on the day and there will be a permanent legacy project in the park.

## **27. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY**

Will Nunhead and Peckham Rye residents be consulted on options for the future use of the Nunhead Green early years centre site before the council decides whether or not to dispose of it?

## **RESPONSE**

As part of the council's children's centre programme the Nunhead early years centre has been replaced by the Rye Oak children's centre. As part of the funding arrangements for the council's ambitious children's centre programme it was agreed that the Nunhead early years centre would be sold. It is anticipated that the service currently run from the facility will be relocated to its new fit for purpose centre in the next couple of months and in the short term the Nunhead early years centre will be used as a temporary home for the Gumboots Nursery which needs to be relocated due to its premises on Crystal Palace Road being substantially improved and extended as part of the programme.

Any decision to sell the property will ultimately be taken by the council's executive. It is likely that the property will be redeveloped. The ultimate use and form of development will be determined by the statutory planning process and subject to the normal statutory consultation processes. We will however prepare a development brief to inform development proposals and will consult with local ward councillors and residents on the content of that brief.

## **28. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM**

Does the executive member for health and adult care agree with me that day centres for older people in Southwark provide vital services and activities for the most vulnerable residents, including the BME communities, and that the present working partnership service level agreements between the voluntary sector and the council has proven to be an effective way of maintaining such services in Southwark?

## **RESPONSE**

The older people's day centres in Southwark have played an important role in offering some older people a vital service in supporting their independence and sense of well being within the community, and the partnership between voluntary organisations and the council has been an effective mechanism for day services and other means of support. Most of the day centres currently commissioned within the voluntary sector were not commissioned directly by the council, but were funded through grant aid programmes and transferred to contract five years ago. Southwark currently has three council-run older people's day centres (following the merger of Southwark Park and Evelyn Coyle), two Age Concern day centres and eight BME community day centre projects.

The current model and provision of adult social services is facing a number of changes and challenges, both in Southwark and nationally, including the changing demographics and aspirations of much of our older population, developments within the national social cohesion agenda, the general transformation of social care under the personalisation agenda and the increasing pressures on local government and social service budgets from poor funding settlements and

changes to the funding formula. These pressures are being added to by the increased demands on social services.

**29. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES**

Can the executive member please give me a comprehensive update on the discussions between the council and the primary care trust with regard to the Aylesbury health centre? When will services begin to run from the centre again?

**RESPONSE**

The council and the primary care trust (PCT) have had a series of productive meetings since February 2009 to investigate the option of reopening the Aylesbury Health Centre. These meetings have concentrated on identifying the work and costs required to make the premises suitable for re-occupation, drawing up an agreement of works, agreeing a new lease that is appropriate and beneficial to both parties (should reopening be the preferred option) and looking at other alternative sites.

As a result of these meetings genuine progress has been made over the last 5 months with the PCT confirming their desire to return to the centre following the investigations to identify the costs and works required, the council and the PCT agreeing a schedule of works and heads of terms for a new lease being agreed between both parties.

In relation to the schedule of works the PCT have agreed to fund the works and be responsible for future health and safety obligations. Improvement and remedial works have also been identified that will need to be carried out in approximately 90 properties in Taplow. The schedule of works is well advanced and subject to PCT funding being confirmed for the repairs it is hoped that these can be implemented by early 2010 to allow for the centre to be reopened.

Heads of terms for a new lease have also been agreed between both parties for a 10 year lease, with the option for the lease to be extended depending on the requirements of the PCT and the status of regeneration on the Aylesbury.

Both the new lease and the schedule of works are subject to the agreement of the PCT Board.

While the closure of the Aylesbury Health Centre has had an impact on service provision, the PCT have continued to provide services to local residents. The option of an alternative site on the Aylesbury footprint has been explored but no suitable premises were identified.

Both the council and the PCT are committed to reopening the Aylesbury Health Centre, and despite the complex and multiple issues that existed, following the decision of the PCT to vacate the building last year, real progress has made towards achieving this outcome.

**30. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR NICK VINEALL**

Having regard to the core strategy draft preferred options paper dated April 2009 which at page 14 states that "We will support development of the railway arches



[in Herne Hill] into niche businesses or other activities that provide vibrancy to the town centre”, what steps does he anticipate being taken in the next 6 months in order to achieve this expressed aim?

#### **RESPONSE**

Under Policy 1.5 of the Southwark Plan, small businesses such as those likely to relocate under railway arches are protected and encouraged, this is applied to development across the whole of Southwark.

I would be happy to work with him, the owners of the arches and the council’s economic development team to help achieve the strategy’s expressed aim.

#### **31. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON**

Is the executive member for regeneration planning to attend the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition this year which runs until the August 16 and is he aware of any interesting regeneration projects that are being highlighted there?

#### **RESPONSE**

I had the pleasure of attending the exhibition, at my own expense, a few weeks ago and was extremely pleased to see designs for the new Canada Water Library proudly on display alongside some of the other most exciting architectural projects currently underway around the world.

I’m sure that she will agree, that not only will this world class library add to the skyline of Rotherhithe, but will also be welcomed by local people because of the excellent facilities and resources which will be contained within it.

#### **32. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN JARDINE-BROWN**

Will the executive member update members on progress in developing the strategy to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies in Southwark and let us know what actions are being prioritised?

#### **RESPONSE**

Although Southwark has the highest conception rates nationally, we do have a reduction on the 1998 baseline figure, and reducing the numbers of teenage conceptions remains a high priority. We are in the process of formulating a refreshed teenage pregnancy strategy with an accompanying action plan.

The strategy is based on an evaluation of current intervention work and the successful actions of other boroughs with similar demographics and success in reducing rates of teenage pregnancy. There is a renewed focus on increasing the availability of contraception and information about contraception, sex and relationships.

The major prioritised actions include:

- A large-scale media campaign, to tie in with the launch of a new condom distribution scheme, which will launch in October

- Signposting young people to services and publicising the availability of contraception, including long acting reversible contraception (LARC), in line with overwhelming evidence and government policy
- Brook Advisory have been commissioned to run a sexual health outreach campaign at various youth events over the summer
- Parental sex and relationship education (SRE) awareness presentations, workshops and training to be held at parent events, to help parents talk to their children about sex and relationships
- A new condom distribution scheme, with a range of easy access points based in youth friendly venues. This will increase free condom venues for young people by 100% by October, and up to 200% by month four of the scheme. It will also bring on board, and extend, the pre-existing C-Card scheme (Condom Card)
- A range of school-based health drop-in centres, able to offer advice and guidance on a wide range of health issues including sexual health and contraception
- A pilot scheme in areas, schools and groups of young people that are deemed to have a higher risk of becoming pregnant, which involves sexual health outreach counselling and drop-in centres
- Training on the pan-London SRE curriculum will be provided to staff in schools with higher rates and risks of teenage pregnancy by the Christopher Winter Project in Autumn 2009, ensuring better quality SRE delivery across schools
- Children's services in the prevention of subsequent pregnancies in young women who have already had a child
- Gender equality and respect work with primary and early secondary age children to be included in personal, social and health education (PSHE) to promote healthy relationships
- We are also exploring the influence of domestic and sexual violence on rates of teenage pregnancy, as well as the effect of previous terminated pregnancies on girls' attitudes and intentions regarding future pregnancies
- Mentors of looked after children (LAC) to be given SRE training to enable them to provide better support for LAC
- Work with the Youth Offending Team to reduce levels of sexual peer pressure and coercion amongst at-risk young people.

**33. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD**

What steps are being taken to ensure that parents in East Dulwich who have so far not been offered a primary school place for September within a reasonably accessible distance from their homes will be found places in East Dulwich primary schools so that they do not have to take complex journeys, often with smaller

children in tow? Given the baby boom in East Dulwich what plans are in place to ensure that there are sufficient primary and nursery places in East Dulwich in future years to meet the needs of these families?

## **RESPONSE**

We were able to offer all applicants for primary school places in the borough, including the East Dulwich area, places within the guidelines that the government sets out for us, which means that they must be within two miles and have a journey time of less than 45 minutes that requires no more than two buses. However, I am aware that a number of parents were not offered a place at one of their four preference schools and I understand the frustration this caused them. I have met with parents in East Dulwich twice in recent weeks to discuss their issues and to ask them to take part in a focus group to help us further improve the admissions process in future years.

When it first became apparent that this was an issue, I made sure that officers were in constant touch with each parent who was unhappy with their offer, to keep them up to date with the situation, and advise them on their options. I am pleased that we have now been able to offer many of these parents alternative places in one of their four preference schools, some even receiving their first preference school.

It is true to say that there has been an increased number of applications to schools in the East Dulwich area this year, although this is not specific to Southwark. Across London, there has been an increase in applications this year above what was anticipated.

London's birth rate is increasing rapidly which has been taken into account in terms of projecting need for reception classes. However, according to London Councils, this has been compounded this year by a number of other issues. For example, the economic downturn appears to have increased demand for state school places compared to the independent sector. There has also been an increase this year in cross borough applications because of capacity issues in neighbouring authorities.

I have asked officers to investigate further, and urgently develop possible options to increase the number of primary school places in the south of the borough.

### **34. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH**

Please detail the percentage of new applicants for primary school places that did not receive a) their first choice of school b) any of their top five choices of school, in the borough by ward.

## **RESPONSE**

Just over 89% of new applicants received one of their four preferences, with 76% receiving their first preference. The council neither plans primary school places nor records applicants' locations on a ward basis.

### **35. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR BOB SKELLY**

Would the leader of the council like to join me in congratulating Councillor Lisa Rajan and her team for the successful conclusion of the negotiations of Southwark's £200 million local education partnership agreement and can he give us an update as to when work will be starting to deliver the improvements to the borough's schools?

#### **RESPONSE**

I would be very happy to join you in congratulating Councillor Rajan, and all of the officers who have worked so hard, and acted so professionally, to set up Southwark's Local Education Partnership Company, 4 Futures.

4 Futures mobilised in May of this year and will be responsible for delivering a £200m programme of investment to the borough's secondary schools which will either completely rebuild or extensively refurbish every secondary school in Southwark.

We are already onsite at both Tuke and St Michal's schools with building work underway on their foundations. Design development work is underway for St Thomas the Apostle College, Spa School, the project to co-locate St Michael and All Angels Academy with Highshore School and the new school on the Walworth Lower School site.

Design specification work is also starting on the final phase of schools which includes Notre Dame, Sacred Heart, St Saviour's and St Olave's, Rotherhithe and the two Bredinghurst sites.

#### **36. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN**

Would the leader of the council please update members on the re-location of Southwark Park Road special school?

#### **RESPONSE**

Provision was made in the primary capital programme approved by the executive in March 2009, for a new building to house the Cherry Gardens Special School at a cost of £14m.

Currently, we are in the process of identifying the very best site for the new building. Potential sites will be discussed with the school before a final recommendation emerges in the early autumn term 2009. I know members will agree with me that Cherry Gardens does an excellent job in educating some of the most vulnerable children in the borough, and that it deserves the best possible facilities to deliver that.

#### **37. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE**

Could the executive member for environment provide a status update on cleaner, greener, safer projects broken down by community council area showing year by year from 2004-09: total number of projects; total projects uncompleted; under-spend?

#### **RESPONSE**

The table below provides a breakdown by community council area on the number of projects in total, those that have been completed and the amount of cleaner, greener, safer (CGS) funding in each area that has been allocated and remains to be spent. There are only 7% of projects approved prior to 2007 which remain to be completed, and it is expected that these will be completed by the end of this financial year.

Community Council	No of projects approved	No of projects completed	CGS funding yet to be spent
Bermondsey	103	79	£779,468
Borough & Banskside	101	68	£1,057,969
Camberwell	134	105	£586,497
Dulwich	167	144	£253,821
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	110	89	£947,012
Peckham	110	74	£1,307,981
Rotherhithe	110	63	£883,099
Walworth	102	74	£892,756
Total	937	696	£6,708,603

**38. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR GORDON NARDELL**

Is the executive member aware of any instances where the council's waste and recycling contractor, Veolia, has taken waste collected in Southwark as household recycling to landfill or for incineration instead of recycling it? How many tonnes of waste that residents had left for collection as recycling have been sent to landfill or for incineration in the last year?

**RESPONSE**

There have been no instances where the council's waste and recycling contractor, Veolia Environmental Services, has taken household waste collected for recycling to landfill or for incineration. Veolia Environmental Services has a company policy to never take materials collected for recycling to landfill or incineration and therefore there have been zero tonnes of such household waste going to landfill or being incinerated.

**39. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED**

Can the executive member tell us why nearly all public toilets have been shut in Southwark? Does the member agree that this can be a severe inconvenience for residents (particularly the vulnerable)?

**RESPONSE**

In Southwark, we believe that public conveniences make a real contribution to a cleaner, greener borough and can help in reducing crime.

I am therefore very pleased to be able to inform Councillor Mohamed that far from reducing the amount of toilet facilities open to the public, we have in fact increased them.

By opening and signposting public toilets in council buildings and private facilities, toilet provision had increased from 17 in 2005 to 34 by December 2008.

Some council owned facilities have been closed because the amount required to bring them into compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 would have been too high. However, we have made sure that when one facility closes, there is suitable alternative provision.

For details of current toilet facilities in Southwark, please see the link on the Southwark website:

<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/YourServices/environment/PublicToilets.html>.

**40. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER**

Can the executive member please provide an update on any plans to make long overdue improvements to East Street market, or to the road surface on East Street?

**RESPONSE**

East Street is a particularly vibrant and popular market, and we recognise that it is economically, socially and culturally important to the borough. Current economic and social conditions have caused difficulties for the market sector nationally. At Southwark we have responded with a robust review of all our markets to see how we can improve the management of markets, modernise trading practices, work with traders and others to develop existing markets and take advantage of new opportunities, for example, establishing more specialist markets.

We believe through this review, that Southwark's markets can continue to innovate and be a means of individualised entrepreneurship and innovation, with East Street being a prime example of a thriving community facility.

The council has brought in over £2m of external investment in the Walworth Road which has also had a positive effect on East Street market and the support of the traders. The investment in Nursery Row Park, adjacent to the market, includes providing places for people to sit while they are visiting the market and we have installed new lighting columns along East Street with £65,000 of cleaner, greener, safer capital allocated by Walworth community council.

We have also spent over £30,000 on improvement works to the road surface on East Street.

In total £175,000, which equates to £100,000 for road resurfacing and £75,000 for street lighting will be allocated to each community council. This will come with a set of recommendations based on a ranking by road condition, one by insurance claims and one by complaints.

It is down to each community council to decide if they wish to heed the recommendations. It is however my view that this would be the opportunity for East Street to be resurfaced if that is what the community council so wishes.

**41. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD THOMAS**

Can the executive member for environment confirm that Southwark will stick to the UK's national cycling infrastructure guidelines and not implement Boris's recent whizzy idea of blue cycle lanes?

**RESPONSE**

The London Cycle Network is currently a green route, and is in line with the National cycle highways scheme. My view is that we should stick with this, so as not to confuse cyclists and other road users by using blue. Instead Transport for London should be looking to enhance the current cycling infrastructure.

I will be having further discussions with Transport for London to express my concern with the proposed implementation of blue cycle lanes, as it is not something I want to see on any of our roads.