

Item No. 3.2	Classification: Open	Date: 28 January 2020	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Motion on the Theme: Homelessness and Housing needs	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The theme for this meeting is Homelessness and Housing needs.

The relevant cabinet member shall submit a motion on the theme. All other political groups on the council are allowed to submit one amendment to the motion. The cabinet member's motion and the amendments do not need to be seconded. The cabinet member will present the motion to the meeting, followed by the lead opposition spokesperson's response and moving of their amendment, if any. Following this, the subject matter of the theme will be open to debate. Amendment(s) from other opposition groups on the council can be moved during this part of the meeting.

Motion from Councillors Leo Pollak, Cabinet Member for Social Regeneration, Great Estates and New Council Homes, and Kieron Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation

1. Council assembly notes that our country, city and borough are facing a housing crisis:
 - a. Nationally over 280,000 people are homeless, with rough sleeping up 165% in the last decade
 - b. London has been hit hardest, with over 170,000 people homeless including over 8,800 who are sleeping rough.
 - c. In Southwark 1 in 47 people are homeless, with 11,000 people on our waiting list for a council home
 - d. Our broken housing market means the private sector is now unaffordable to an increasing number of Southwark residents, with the average rent for a two bedroom flat now being £24,000 a year to rent and the average asking price for a home being over £900,000.
 - e. Southwark's housing crisis means far too many people in our borough are facing either overcrowding, homelessness, housing insecurity, poverty, health issues and wealth inequalities because of their housing situation.

2. Council assembly further notes that this housing crisis has been exacerbated by successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition governments, including by:
 - a. Undermining action to deliver more council homes by cutting the affordable housing grant, hiking up the cost of borrowing for councils making it more expensive to build new council homes and increasing the Right to Buy discount so that over 1300 council homes have been lost through Right to Buy in Southwark since 2012.
 - b. Slashing and then freezing the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and imposing the Bedroom Tax, benefit cap and a five week wait for Universal

- Credit, leaving a growing number of households with no way of paying all or part of their rent
- c. Enforcing a hostile environment that has left a growing number of people with no access to public funds including no access to most homelessness and rough sleepers' support.
3. Council assembly notes that the previous Liberal Democrat-led administration in Southwark contributed to the scale of the housing crisis, by:
 - a. Abolishing Southwark's housing department, and leaving a £600m hole in the finances
 - b. Failing to maintain standards in Southwark's housing stock, meaning that when Labour took over the council, only around half of council homes met the decent homes standard
 - c. Putting off decisions on the investment needed in Southwark's estates when the funding environment was much better
 - d. Never committing to building a single council home since.
 4. Council assembly notes the radical action Southwark Labour is already taking to address the housing crisis locally, by:
 - a. Delivering the most ambitious council house-building programme in the country, building 11,000 new council homes by 2043 or earlier, with a pipeline already established across over 150 sites delivering over 5000 council homes across the borough.
 - b. Resetting the policy framework for the future of our council estates through the Great Estates programme to Expand and Enrich our estates, with any redevelopment requiring a net increase in council homes, keeping communities together, and estate improvement plans that provide an uplift in everyone's living environment.
 - c. Tackling rough sleeping, with the number of people sleeping rough in Southwark now believed to be under 30, a reduction from 47 in 2018.
 - d. Investing in award winning homelessness prevention services, with the highest rate of homelessness prevention in London and the second highest rate in England, and ending the use of 'Bed and Breakfast' accommodation for families in temporary accommodation.
 - e. Taking extensive action to tackle empty properties, including contacting every private owner of an empty home in Southwark to offer them help and grants to rent out their home, supporting 500 landlords do so since 2011, as well as charging 200% council tax on empty homes.
 - f. Leading the debate nationally to reform our broken housing economy, with campaigns to raise the LHA rate, boost affordable housing investment, suspend or mitigate the impact of Right to Buy and reform the land compensation code.
 5. Council assembly calls on cabinet to:
 - a. Use every tool and lever available to meet the entire housing need of the borough, including building new land capacity and resource partnerships that increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes, especially social rent council homes.
 - b. Develop a refreshed housing strategy that sets out how the council and housing providers can work together to deliver genuinely secure, high quality, affordable and sustainable homes for all Southwark residents.
 - c. To build on the council's success in Ending the use of 'Bed and Breakfast' accommodation for families in temporary accommodation and to now go further and end the use of nightly paid for every but very short term emergency use.

- d. Work with the Labour Mayor of London to:
 - i. Secure more investment in the genuinely affordable homes Londoners need, with the first priority being council homes, including building the case for funding that matches construction costs, and
 - ii. Promote the London Model of Tenure reform in the private rented sector, including creating open-ended tenancies, scrapping break clauses, and removing section 21 'no fault' evictions, and to build the case for fair limitation on rent rises.
- e. Lobby the Government to raise the Local Housing Allowance so it pays that actual cost of rent a home in our borough, scrap the bedroom tax, and create a social security system that guarantees on-time payments and an end to poverty.
- f. Continue to work with Shelter, Helen Hayes MP and other land reform activists on our Affordable Land for Affordable Housing campaign, to reform the land compensation code to better meet the housing needs of Southwark residents.
- g. Continue to lobby for the suspension of the Right to Buy, or otherwise for 'half-way' powers that mitigate its impact, including covenants requirement leaseholders to sub-let at social rents, and one in/out caps on Right to Buy applications based on social homes completed.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet members motion	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Andrew Weir 020 7525 7222

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Chidilim Agada, Head of Constitutional Services
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