

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(COUNCIL TAX SETTING)

WEDNESDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2012

QUESTIONS ON THE REPORT

ITEM 2.1: POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY - 2012/13-2014/15 - REVENUE BUDGET

1. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

How much is this budget spending on free lunches for children who live outside of Southwark or for those parents that earn more than £25,000?

RESPONSE

The data requested is not held.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thank you Madam Mayor, yes I do. I am slightly terrified by the answer really, that the man in charge of money at Southwark Council does seem to know how much is spent on free lunches for children from Lambeth, Lewisham or anywhere else. Perhaps he can tell us if he is aware of evidence from Islington Council where they have been giving free lunches for three years and where obesity has actually gone up and, if he is aware of that, whether he would reconsider this £8 million bribe that Labour is insisting on?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Al-Samerai for her supplementary question. We obviously had less than 24 hours to provide a response to what actually was quite a detailed question in this case. This question reached me at 10.30am yesterday and we had to submit the responses to be ready for this paper by 10.00am this morning, so as I said it was less than a 24 hour turn around.

I accept that you may have put the question in before and I think that there is a question here about actually the time that we have in terms of notice for the questions, but I think we will have to pick up constitutionally.

What I would say is having done a little bit more work in the few hours we have had since having to get these things in by 10.00am, we are aware that figure is approximately 19% but that there is further work to be done to absolutely firm up those figures. However in terms of your point on obesity, I would like to read you this quote:

“School meals are planned to meet nutritional needs of young children. They can really help in producing a healthy balanced diet. ... A healthy life style adopted at a young age can have life long benefits. Healthy eating is vital

given the dramatic increase in obesity rates amongst children. School meals can contribute significantly to healthy living.”

Not my words; these are the words of Simon Hughes MP put on the Liberal Democrats’ own website in Southwark – so if your own MP agrees with our policy, perhaps you need to be thinking again about your own approach.

2. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

Given that bringing the call centre in house would save the council £4.5 million, will he join me in calling for officers to pursue this as a matter of urgency following Vangent’s failure to deliver £1.3 million of savings and being taken over by an American arms dealer?

RESPONSE

Following a change in ownership, the council is continuing discussions with Vangent UK. These discussions are contractually and commercially confidential. We are seeking to resolve the position, in a manner which best protects the interests of the council and its council tax payers, as quickly as practicably possible.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to thank Councillor Livingstone for his response, but doesn’t he think that his words are slightly officer-like and weasely?

A couple of years ago we all across this chamber called for the Liberata contract to be brought in house. While negotiations are still going on, given the amount this council can save and given that Vangent have failed to deliver the savings they have promised, and given that that means that cuts will have to be made next year to fund that difference, is it not about time that he got off the fence and called for the officers to bring this service in house?

RESPONSE

I need to be very careful with my answer because as the answer which is written down makes very clear, we are at a very delicate stage of some commercially confidential conversations on this, so I need to be very careful in terms of the specifics which are very different to the Liberata situation a few years ago.

What I would like to say is first of all, that the commitments in terms of cuts that we now identify are no different to the ones that you have identified here. We will be ensuring those cuts are made and we are absolutely committed to finding those savings, but secondly I do think it a little rich coming from a party that gave a 10 year contract to Vangent in the first place to be criticising us about the arrangements that we have got here. Clearly we are trying to put right not only the money here, but also given the work that housing scrutiny sub-committee has done in terms of keeping performance indicators, actually the quality of the service as well and it is absolutely vital that we get that right, we get the quality

right, and we manage to make those savings; and that is what we are fully committed to do.

3. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Given the budget cuts made to the noise team, how many visits have the noise team made, in response to calls, on Saturday nights, after 1.00am, since March 2011? Please provide a monthly breakdown?

RESPONSE

The noise team received 301 calls on Saturday nights between 01.00 and 07.00, between March 2011 and January 2012. The noise team makes visits when the noise is ongoing at the time of the response. On this basis 79 visits were made during the period of March 2011 and January 2011.

The breakdown by month is as follows:-

Year	Month	Calls received past 01:00hrs-07:00hrs	No of visits made *visits only necessary when noise ongoing at time of response
2011	March* still 24hrs	34	9
2011	April * still 24hrs	25	9
2011	May *still 24hrs	16	5
2011	June	23	8
2011	July *5 Saturdays in month	27	7
2011	August	24	2
2011	September	27	11
2011	October *5 Saturdays in month	34	7
2011	November	21	6
2011	December *5 Saturdays in month	23	3
2012	January	32	12
2012	February	15	2

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to thank the cabinet member for his response. I am concerned because in the previous three years before the funding cuts that you took last year were implemented, the number of complaints received and responded to was considerably higher; so would he give a commitment here that he will re-look at the policy? I think the cuts you have

made here have seriously damaged the effectiveness of the noise team, certainly at weekends. The officers go off duty before a lot of very serious noise disturbance happens, so would he make a commitment here, in order to protect basic services, to re-look at the effectiveness of the current noise team operation and perhaps consider instead reconfiguring some of the spend in order to shore it up and provide the kind of good service it used to provide.

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Bowman for her supplementary question; I think the figures show here there has not been any deterioration in service since the changes have been made. I think those figures are quite illustrative of that fact, however I think your broader point about are we keeping this under review and should we look at the hours involved within the current funding envelope, I think is a sensible one. I am already having those conversations with officers about are we absolutely sure we have the got the hours right and how are we looking at that so I can reassure you that is a conversation I am already having with officers about the budget we have already got.

4. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

What has been the total cost of the Democracy Commission? What has been the total cost of council assembly for 2011/12 and how does this compare to the savings made to community councils for 2012/13? Please include the cost of hall hire, officer time, and any other miscellaneous expenditure.

RESPONSE

The costs of the Democracy Commission have been covered within existing resources, primarily officer time.

Retaining council assembly meetings at the town hall would have meant retaining the town hall building almost exclusively for that purpose. In contrast, the disposal of a long lease on the Town Hall will release revenue currently put towards its maintenance and security. The 2011/12 budget for the property is £627,000. It is estimated that not less than £420,000 per year would be required to keep the town hall open as a stand-alone facility, not including the cost of any refurbishment or improvement works that were needed. Revenue costs around £67,000 per year would be needed to maintain the chamber and ancillary facilities alone. This is significantly higher than the costs of the current arrangements for council assembly at a variety of venues across the borough.

In relation to costs attaching to the current arrangements for council assembly happening in other venues for 2011/2012 these are as follows:

- venue hire - £6,757
- public address and sound system – £11,500.

This does not include staffing and other costs for example transport that are no greater than holding meetings at the town hall. It should also be noted that costs vary slightly depending on the venue.

The community council saving is £344,000 by contrast with £18,257 for council assembly.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHON MITCHELL

I would like to thank the cabinet member for his detailed response, but the real issue for us, is can a price or cost be put on real local democracy? Community councils have a real value. What is the evidence for that? You will know that recently in the south of the borough we suggested that instead of spending about £50,000 on a firework event, that money could be saved and it has been saved I think in this financial year, and rethink how that could be better spent again in the future; so those are uses that community councils have. So can you tell me please, that community councils do have a proper value in themselves; so what price can you really put on local democracy? Are you not throwing away the baby with the bath water in political terms? We don't want a highly centralised government here in Southwark.

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Mitchell for his supplemental question. I would like to point out this budget does devolve some more revenue spends to community councils. You talk about how well Dulwich is working; there are no proposed changes in terms of the scale of Dulwich community council and certainly no proposals to take away powers.

I think it is also worth noting that we hear quite a lot of words about how great community councils are, how great it is to be doing things at a local level, but actually the record is a little different and some of us here know that there are members on the opposite side who think they should be commended for attending only 53% of meetings and I understand in 2011 that a particular councillor only turned up for 16% of the Rotherhithe community council meetings and he is certainly not alone in the list of people whose attendance has not been great at community councils. It goes beyond that – I was at Rotherhithe area housing forum yesterday; the only councillors there (we have six Liberal Democrat councillors, three Labour councillors in that area housing forum) were Labour councillors. I totted up some figures as well based on from the beginning from last year to now and you are three times as likely to see a Labour councillors at those area housing forums as you would a Liberal Democrat one, so when they talk about devolving power locally, the rhetoric is one thing the actual having the responsibility for turning up at these meetings seems something completely different.

5. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

The leader announced an additional £4 million for improving cycling facilities, please can you provide a breakdown of what the £4 million is being spent on? How much of this £4 million has been newly assigned to creating segregated cycle lanes?

RESPONSE

Neither the leader nor the council announced an additional £4 million for improving cycle facilities. £3.4 million of the money the council will spend on

cycling in the next four years is capital and therefore not relevant to a debate on the revenue budget. The breakdown of revenue spending is as follows:

	2011/12 £	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	Total £
Cycle training	163,000	156,000	134,000	453,000
Travel awareness	15,000	15,000	15,000	45,000
Road safety, education training and publicity	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
Sustainable modes of travel strategy implementation	5,000	15,500	15,000	35,500
Cycle parking in schools	54,000	5,000	5,000	64,000
Total £	247,000	201,500	179,000	627,500

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you very much councillor, for the breakdown you have given me. I notice that much has been made in the local press lately about cycle training for school children and I noticed that the first line of your table indicates there is to be a reduction in the second and third year in cycle training and what I wanted to know was is this a reduction in funding for training for school children or for adults or for both and what does it mean in terms of numbers of people trained? Thank you.

RESPONSE

I think there is certainly some detail I will have to come back to you with, in terms of numbers specifically involved. We are certainly not imposing any reduction in what is happening in schools as part and parcel of the proposals. I think in terms of the detail it would be helpful to write to you subsequently because I think we need to put all those things together so we can share them with you.

6. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Why has Southwark Council cut its bike to work scheme but retained an officer to arrange leased cars for staff? How much does the council spend on the provision of leased cars?

RESPONSE

The Bikes 4 Work scheme has not been pursued since the government made retrograde changes to the national rules governing the scheme, which gives a worse deal for cyclists and opens the council up to risks. As an alternative we now offer an interest free loan scheme for those members of staff who want to purchase a bike. We will of course keep all incentives for cycling under review should the attractiveness of the scheme change.

The council does not retain an officer solely to arrange lease cars. Where a member of staff receives a lease car then it is in place of another benefit or allowance. There is, therefore, no real additional cost.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank the cabinet member for his answer and in particular for his commitment to keep all incentives for cycling under review, but it is a shame nonetheless he feels he intends to cancel Southwark's participation in the Bikes 4 Work scheme and particularly given this is a scheme that our counterparts in Lewisham feel able to support and significant other major employers, so in view of that I would ask him whether he could look again at perhaps reversing his decision so that the significant discounts can once again be offered to those who want to cycle to work?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Thornton for his supplemental question. As the answer makes clear, the change has been driven by a change, unfortunately, that the coalition government has put in place in terms of the rules about how this system can work; in particular the issue about what happens to the bike at the end of the lease programme where they, the participant as I understand it, is then asked to purchase the bike, which was not part of the previous scheme, and actually means the incentives are far less than they used to be and I think undermines the viability of the programme. Clearly I think we all believe it is very important to encourage more and more people to use, certainly our own our staff to use, their cars far less often and one of the things I have been having is conversations with officers as well is certainly what we can do about cycling but also what we can do beyond that about how we can reduce the amount of money that our council officers spend on taxi fares and make sure they use more public transport in the future.

7. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

Please can the cabinet member provide a break down by current community council areas, of how many hanging baskets were there on Southwark's streets in 2010/11 and 2011/12 and what is the projected number for 2012/13?

RESPONSE

This question relates to capital expenditure rather than revenue, as these baskets (including associated revenue costs) have been funded through cleaner, greener, safer capital money devolved to community councils.

As this question does not relate to the budget report, we will provide the member with an answer to his query in writing in due course.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to thank the cabinet member for his response and look forward to actually receiving the numbers. Madam Mayor can I just ask; we all have pride and have reason to take pride in the area in which we live and hanging baskets is a big contribution to that.

Since Labour's cuts to the cleaner greener safer fund has led to a cut in the number hanging baskets if not all of them in our streets, will you back the Liberal Democrats' proposal for a community cheque for £50,000 per year per ward in order to maximise the opportunity for local people to make their communities the best possible place to live?

RESPONSE

I think as my answer makes clear these hanging baskets have been bought out of capital funding rather than revenue funding so it is not something that is directly relevant to this budget. Community councils still have CGS money they are still spending it on hanging baskets; we in Peckham for example have used some of our CGS that was left over from schemes that were not implemented to have some new hanging baskets put in around Peckham Park Road. I would certainly encourage other community councils to look at that money. They don't cost a great deal to actually keep in place for a year. There is scope to do that already you will also see later on in the response that I have given to Councillor Morris about what I think some of those difficulties are around the community chest proposal.

8. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

In preparation for the council assembly meeting on 6 July 2011, the cabinet member for culture, leisure, sports and the Olympics wrote to all members asking for suggestions on how to improve sporting opportunities for young people in which the Liberal Democrat group tabled a number of suggestions. Please can the cabinet member outline what has been included in this year's (2012/13) revenue budget that was not included in the previous year's budget as a result of that meeting?

RESPONSE

The following proposals related to capital expenditure or the housing revenue account and are not therefore relevant:

- The motion entitled "Homes for Families"
- Items related to the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre
- Seven Islands Leisure Centre
- A capital Olympic legacy.

The following proposals did not have any financial implication and are not therefore relevant:

- The nature of themed debates
- Proposals to join the charter to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport.

The proposals concerning revenue were as follows:

- The proposal to scrap free, healthy school meals
- The proposal to reinstate funding for Community Games.

We remain absolutely committed to free, healthy school meals. It was one of this administration's election promises and as such there is no question of us reversing our decision.

We are unable due to the scale of government cuts to continue to directly fund the Community Games from next year. However, the council will continue to support sport in the community through an investment of £300,000 per annum in Community Sport delivery and support.

The community sport team are also delivering a comprehensive programme of Olympic and Paralympic themed projects from the core budget provided to secure an Olympic legacy in terms of involvement in sport, these include:

1. 10 Olympic and Paralympic Themed Events:
 - 2 Borough-wide Events and 8 Mini Olympic/Paralympic Themed Events.
2. The London Youth Games programme:
 - Team Southwark finished 18th in 2011, won women's basketball, fastest school child in London, won mixed U11 football.
 - 1,700 young people took part and 10,200 attendances at trials, training and competition.
3. Teaching Values Through Leadership Resource Certificate with Sports Leaders UK:
 - Schools Programme delivered by Community Games Coaches which will engage with 2,012 young people by end of the Paralympics
4. Volunteers Programme:
 - Training, deployment and engagement with volunteers. Southwark Community Games' Volunteers programme was awarded the London 2012 "Inspired By" mark in 2012.
5. Paralympic and Disability Sport:
 - *Inclusive & Active 2* Disability Access Strategy for London– Adopted by Southwark in July 2011, Councillor Ward is Southwark's *Inclusive & Active 2* Champion.
 - Disability Sports Programme has targets of 700 individuals and 3,500 attendances in 2011/12, on target.
6. Women and Girls:
 - The highest uptake nationally against the *Us Girls* Sport England programme in Southwark with 550+ young women taking part in Southwark, won national recognition for its success.
7. Sportivate Funding:
 - Table below of funding provided through Community Sport Team from Sport England in 2011 for community sport sessions.

Sport	Project Name	Deliverer Organisation	Total
Judo	British Judo Association's Sportivate Challenge	British Judo Association	£2,111.00
Football	Sportivate 16+ Football	Kickstart	£623.00
Football	Sportivate Girls Football Competition	London Active Communities	£3,772.00
Basketball	Sportivate MacPro Basketball	MACPro	£1,195.95
Boxing	Sportivate Fight For Change Boxing	Fight for Change	£1,410.00
Table Tennis	Sportivate Outdoor Gyms	Dulwich Table Tennis Club	£1,432.00
Roller Skating	Sportivate Roller Skating	Our Voice	£3,726.00
Multi-Sport	Sportivate Millwall Summer Football Tournaments	Millwall Community Scheme	£1,925.00
Netball	Sportivate Elephant & Castle Leisure Centre	Fusion Lifestyle	£829.43
Handball	Sportivate Handball	LBS/ London Youth	£2,446.00
Martial Arts	Sportivate Jiu Jitsu club	Jiu Jitsu Club	£924.00
American Football	Sportivate American Football	Gridiron	£3,108.00
Boxing	Kings College ABC	Kings College ABC	£2,012.00
			£25,514.38

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Thank you very Madam Mayor, thanks and no thanks to the executive member for his answer. I notice that you have stated in your response that half of the questions we have asked are not relevant and on the other half you have answered is not even relevant to the question. It has been eight months since the Liberal Democrats put forward a number of strong suggestions for increasing sporting opportunities for young people in Southwark. As your answer shows that you are yet again ignoring local suggestions and adopting a 'Labour knows best' dictatorship, with all the consultations you have done was it just not a sham?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Blango for his supplementary question; I think that the point of the answer is that of the eight proposals that were put forward in that debate, actually only two of them are relevant to the considerations that we have tonight. These are questions on the revenue budget, there are only two, and those are the two that you see there that are directly relevant. There were two others which don't have any funding implications at all and four which were related to capital expenditure. I am happy to take those questions when we are looking at those issues. I am happy to take those questions as part of the normal members' question time in the normal council assembly, but we certainly have written answers to everything (and you have very clear answers on those two points which are) directly related to the revenue budget; which we are considering tonight. So I am sorry if that is not what you wanted or not what you

expected, but we are keeping very clearly to the question you asked and its relevance to the report we are considering tonight.

9. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

Following the 'Colour Thief' debacle, have you yet learnt the lesson that events budgets should be devolved to community councils in order to get the right event wanted by the local community?

RESPONSE

The challenge with this suggestion is that with the current model of three clusters of events these do not fit neatly into community council boundaries.

For example, of the £170,000 given to events in the borough, £50,000 is spent in Rotherhithe ward, on the Bermondsey Carnival and the Rotherhithe Festival. If we were to implement your suggestion, it would mean reducing the pot available for these events in the Rotherhithe community council area to £20,238 making these much loved events unviable.

I am sure that Councillor Nelson would agree with me that losing these events would be a tragedy to the community in her ward.

10. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK

Is it fair that councillors are receiving increases of inflation in their allowances while council staff face pay freezes?

RESPONSE

Councillors' allowances do not go up in line with inflation. I refer Councillor Clark to paragraph 35 of the member allowances scheme:

"Basic allowance and travel, subsistence and carers allowances are adjusted in accordance with the national local government pay settlement and allowances for officers. SRA levels are set by council assembly and are not subject to inflationary adjustments."

11. WITHDRAWN

12. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

Will he support the Liberal Democrat proposal to fund the Southwark Mediation Centre? If not, will he ensure that the Southwark Mediation Centre will be named in contracts to be used in all future disputes for every new external contract the council makes?

RESPONSE

As members will be aware, Southwark Mediation Centre was not previously funded through the general revenue budget, but was instead funded through

neighbourhood renewal fund money (now abolished by government) and the housing revenue account.

I have met with Southwark Mediation Centre on a number of occasions over the last year to discuss this organisation's funding challenges and council officers have also been meeting with their trustees to support their plans for diversifying their income. The council has also given the organisation £17,140 from the voluntary sector transition fund to assist them in this transformation.

I am happy to discuss your suggestion involving contracts with officers to see whether this is a further practical step that we can take to support the work of Southwark Mediation Centre.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

I would like to thank the cabinet member for his answer and I am grateful that he will look at that suggestion. It is probably too much to ask him to welcome anything the coalition government does, but I notice that in changes to the procurement rules now councils are also allowed to take into account social value when awarding contracts. Is this something the council will be doing, and will he bring some proposals to council assembly so we can talk about how we can use our procurement power, which I think the public sector is very bad at doing generally in this country, to better promote some of the social objectives which I think we all share across this chamber in Southwark?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Stanton for his supplemental question. As my answer said, we are more than happy to have those conversations with our lawyers and procurements experts about whether this is something that is viable within the legislation that you have outlined. So I am certainly happy to do that and obviously feed back in due course when we have a clearer advice on the matter.

13. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

How many people attended day care centres for each month in 2009/10 and 2010/11 and for each month since your 100% cut to their funding?

RESPONSE

The average daily attendance at voluntary sector day centres and lunch clubs is as follows:

Year	Average Daily Attendance
2009/10	342
2010/11	288
(current)	218

The council has been working intensively with 11 older people's day centres and luncheon clubs in the voluntary sector to find new ways of working to support independent living. While block funding of the centres has ceased, as part of the

move towards personal budgets, all groups have continued to operate, and each organisation has been finding more cost effective ways of meeting the needs of their clients, including sharing premises and other means of reducing costs.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

Thank you Madam Mayor. I would like to thank the cabinet member for his answer and I actually note the reduction in attendance since the cuts to the funding of these day centres. I was wondering if you could say something about how the attendance at the council run day centres compares with these figures?

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Thank you very much Councillor Capstick. To give the actual figures I will have to write to you with the figures. I know that my deputy, Councillor Situ, was visiting day centres just last week and as far as we are aware people are still attending, they are making use of their personal budgets, they are making choices about where to go to and how to spend their money; so as far as we are concerned all the day centres are still open and they are running well.

14. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

The cabinet have taken the decision for SASBU to only deal with 'critical cases'. Please can the cabinet member list a) the types of cases it will now deal with, b) the types of cases it will no longer deal with, and c) how much do you anticipate to save?

RESPONSE

Southwark anti social behaviour unit (SASBU) will focus its resources on cases of anti social behaviour where there is serious anti social behaviour which affects and individual, family or community and where other types of interventions have not achieved a reduction for those affected.

The types of cases that the team will continue to deal with include cases where there is a serious risk to the safety of an individual or family, gang related cases or cases where there is a serious risk of gang related violence, anti social behaviour cases where legal action is required, hate crime cases, domestic violence cases, cases which require closure orders on an address, cases where anti social behaviour is affecting a whole area and require significant partnership resources to resolve.

SASBU will no longer deal with anti social behaviour cases such as neighbour conflict, nuisance behaviour on estates or single issue street based anti social behaviour, which can be managed by other services. SASBU will however continue to work with housing, housing providers and other services to provide assistance, support and training to officers as required.

The savings are as set out in the budget papers: £90,000 covering three posts.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you for your response. Given the close relationship between alcohol and crime I am wondering is the number of secret shopper visits to licensed premises to control the sales of alcohol to under age likely to fall next year?

RESPONSE

It is certainly not our intention. That is something we see as a very serious matter and that we will continue to pursue. It is really important that we are ensuring that alcohol does not end up in the hands of young people inappropriately. It is probably also worth mentioning that we had a great deal of success last week. The Metropolitan Police Service have been launching what they called 'Operation Condor' which is a big programme looking at licensing issues where there might be problems, with our own staff working very closely with the night time economy team on that piece of work. Overall across London there were 12 unlicensed or incorrectly operating institutions that were closed down. Of those 12 across London, seven were in Southwark as part of that piece of work; so this is something I feel we are performing very well on to make sure we have those controls in place.

15. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

After the meeting of Bermondsey community council which you attended, will you now listen to the democratic views expressed, retain the current boundaries and allow each community council to manage its own budget?

RESPONSE

It is ironic that Councillor Manchester talks of the "democratic views expressed" after she tried to block any discussion of the council's budget at Bermondsey community council. The fact that local residents had to fight tooth and nail with the chair for the budget even to be an item on the agenda suggests that for Bermondsey's Liberal Democrat councillors there is quite a significant gap between their rhetoric and reality on local democracy.

While I understand the desire to maintain the existing community councils structure, this is simply not possible given the scale of the reductions in funding we are facing from the government. As Councillor Manchester and her colleagues will be aware, the funding cuts from their government are enormous and will impact on every service the council offers. At a time when we are making really tough spending decisions regarding frontline services, Southwark residents simply would not accept if we could not find the necessary £344,000 of savings from the community councils' budget.

Furthermore the Liberal Democrats had representation on the Democracy Commission which looked at a large number of suggestions including this one of devolving the budgets and knew that this was impractical as the staff and the spend on items was shared across community council areas. It is important to note that in the end the Liberal Democrats choose not to register any

recommendations formally with the Democracy Commission although they were signed up and contributing to it from the beginning.

We have managed to achieve these savings while still retaining five community council areas with formal decision making powers, something other councils, including Waltham Forest – which Southwark used as a template for community councils – have not done. We are also giving community councils cleaner, greener, safer revenue budgets for the first time. Something the last administration failed to do.

It is also worth noting that many Southwark residents actually welcome the merger. In Peckham and Peckham Rye, for example, there was broad support as it will bring Peckham under one community council. Similarly residents in Borough and Bankside will be able to have more of a say on the regeneration of Elephant and Castle.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank the cabinet member for his answer. ‘Tooth and nail’? One person actually requested that it be put on the agenda, and we found out afterwards it was a Labour activist anyway so that is irrelevant, and we consider that domestic violence is more important. Anyway, your answer just goes to show that this administration are power crazy, ignoring the views of local people. At the meeting you claimed that the reason for proposing withdrawing community councils to five – and I quote the minutes – that according to the relevant legislation about the size of community council areas, only having four areas would not be possible. Could you please cite the legislation you refer to?

RESPONSE

That was, as I say, some advice that I had received in some of the conversations around community councils that we were not, as I understand the rules and regulations, we were not meant to have less than five if you have got a framework that operates in terms of those local arrangements. So I will double check that advice and check what the source of it was. I am happy to come back to you if this is incorrect and apologise if that was not correct. However, the fundamental point is we have some massive cuts that are facing this council; we need to make some really difficult decisions. It is not right for community councils to not play a role if the consequence of not doing something about community councils is having to make bigger cuts to services for people. It is absolutely right we try to live within our means in community councils, and I think that was the main point I was trying to say.

Clearly there is a big crossover between those people who go to both Bermondsey community council and Rotherhithe community council. I know that because when I had questions at Rotherhithe community council about why we are doing this to community councils, most of the people who ask me questions lived in Bermondsey, which is sort of a quite an interesting reflection; there is clearly a commonality of issues in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, and I don’t think that is an inappropriate decision to move to. I think it is also important for people in Borough and Bankside to be having a clear say in what is happening in the Elephant and Castle. It always seemed a little strange to me that in Peckham

community council we have this strange line down Peckham High Street which seems to divide the community.

So I think that there are proposals here that we can have community councils that still work really well for the local communities, and I think hopefully (I understand you lot are not happy with those decisions over there) that after the decision is made we can all come together and actually try to work out ways that we can deepen democracy in terms of using community councils; get more people involved and actually properly think a little bit outside of what is quite a rigid framework of community councils to ensure more people are having more to say about what is happening locally.

16. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

When will you present any concrete evidence to council assembly that spending £8 million on free lunches has resulted in a reduction in obesity levels in Southwark? Have you received any evidence from the universal programme in Islington that there has been a reduction in obesity?

RESPONSE

There will be an annual evaluation of the programme. The evaluation of the initial development phase already shows the programme is positively influencing children's eating habits.

Data on the obesity levels of pupils from the government's national weighing programme will be available when the current year 1 pupils reach year 6.

The universal programme in Islington did not measure direct impact on obesity.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank the cabinet member for his answer but could he actually explain why he believes spending over £2 million on free lunches for pupils living outside the borough or who do not qualify for them on an unproven scheme to reduce obesity, where money could be spent on proven programmes more relevant to our residents such as school crossing patrols, community games, cleaner streets, Southwark Mediation Service etc, etc. Labour are failing to get the basics while wasting our cash on unnecessary give-aways such as school lunches; a blatant bribe?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank my good friend Councillor Hook for his supplemental question. He won't be surprised I don't agree with him as made clear in the figures that were given earlier but I think he has his figures slightly wrong there in terms of the maths. I think it is worth saying this is not just about obesity, obesity is really important. The highest level of child obesity in the country; I spoke earlier about what Simon Hughes said on the matter but I think it might also be worth saying that getting children into the school canteen is vital, the benefit of healthy school meals are clear, encouraging them to take up school meals is important step to tackling childhood obesity which means schools can help hard pressed families, again that is children's minister Sarah Tether – another Liberal

Democrat – whose words I am quoting there. So his own MPs are talking in favour in what we are doing. But of course the free healthy meals programme is a lot more important than just about obesity, obesity is a big issue and we need to tackle that, it is not only about trying to tackle those real pressures that people have who are just earning just above the income support level, those people who have to pay £200 per child per term at the moment. That is a real burden for lots of families in this borough. That is one of the other reasons we are doing this, we are trying to tackle some of the pressures that lots of parents are facing and we are trying to do our best to help them in this situation.

17. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Given the budget cuts made to cash limit the fostering rates, how many adoptions were made in 2011/12? How does this compare to the number of adoptions made in 2009/10 and 2010/11?

RESPONSE

There is no relationship between the rates we pay foster carers and the numbers of adoptions. These are two separate but overlapping services. Foster care allowances were frozen for 2010/11. However this did not have an impact either on retention rates or our ability to recruit new carers. Indeed we anticipate an increase in prospective carers being taken to panel in 2012/13 because of our new recruitment strategy.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of payments to ensure we remain competitive. This has been subject to wide consultation, including Southwark's foster carers association and is expected to come into place from 1 April 2012. As a result of the review, Southwark will now adopt the national fostering network rate as the "basic rate" for all carers. Each year the national fostering rate is reviewed independently and increased with inflation. Southwark will therefore increase its "basic rate" for all carers in line with the national fostering rate.

Southwark's independently chaired adoption panel approves children as suitable for adoption.

Numbers of children adopted through Southwark Council:

- 2009/10 – 22
- 2010/11 – 17
- 2011/12 – 21 (projected).

Ofsted inspected Southwark's fostering service in December 2011 and judged the service to be good with outstanding features.

Ofsted inspected Southwark's adoption service in January 2012 and judged the service as overall good with some outstanding features. The inspectors noted that we have sufficient adopters to meet the needs of children in Southwark. Adopters were very positive about the process and the support they received and praised the adoption team highly.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank the cabinet member for his answer. I know this is a little bit of an overlap and I meant for fostering, however since the decision making on adoption of children is being taken out of the local authority, there will be a lot of savings from the panels that used to make the decision on adoption of children in Southwark. Will these saving made from the panels be reinvested back into foster care?

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Thank you very much for your question. At the meeting only last week at which both you and I were present some information was given around changes to adoption panels but there was no proposal to remove the local authority role within that. So there will therefore be no savings because there is no change in terms of the local authority role.

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Are you telling the people of Dulwich that the only way they can have safe roads for their children is for the community council to spend its devolved revenue budget for lollipop patrol officers rather than using the money to introduce new services as community councils in other areas will be able to do?

RESPONSE

A road safety risk assessment was carried out at the school crossing patrols and recommended that the school crossing patrol at Dulwich Village/Turney Road be retained. We have followed this recommendation. However, the safety risk assessment made no such recommendation for any other crossing patrol.

Cleaner, greener, safer revenue funding will be available for community councils to spend on local priorities. This applies to all community council areas. If Dulwich members choose to continue to support school crossing patrols they will still have £15,000 remaining for spending on other priorities.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Livingstone for your answer, first of all I would like to point out two errors in your answer which I don't think you are aware of. I know it probably did not come from you but the road traffic assessments were agreed to be invalid. One of them were taken on a day when the schools broke up for Easter and the other one was taken at the time when there was not the highest amount of children crossing the road and they did agree to redo them and they have not redone them, so that is point number one.

Point number two is an officer told us that the crossing guard that we need will actually cost £18,000 so that leaves £12,000 between three wards for this devolved funding spend. So I just wanted you to have these figures in your head for my supplemental and the question I get asked most in Village ward is why on

earth is this administration earmarked a quarter of a million pounds per year for free school meals in Dulwich, Dulwich Village which they probably don't need? This money we could actually use to pay for football teams that we do not have funding for, the school crossing guards we do not have funding for; we could actually even use the balance of this funding to raise the thresholds for some people on the border – my question is, can we have a consultation in Village ward to actually ask the people whether they want to spent this quarter of a million pounds on free school meals or on services that we require?

RESPONSE

I've already set out the position I think very clearly in terms of free healthy school meals. I think the reality is actually you go down to Dulwich, and I know even in Village ward there are certainly areas which have some significant deprivation as I know Councillor Crookshank-Hilton, we had that discussion about the view of perhaps a stereotypical view of Dulwich is not an accurate one and we have had some useful conversations on that matter. We have clearly said we have looked at the issue of the crossing at Turney Road and Village Way, and even though it is a push button crossing we have decided there is a strong case to have a crossing warden there so that has now been put back into place.

In terms of the other crossings, we have gone back and looked at those surveys and we are now convinced that they are a robust evidence base on which to make this decision. However, we have had an ongoing conversation between Dulwich councillors and the rest of us on which is the best way of doing all of this. We have instituted the cleaner, greener, safer revenue fund which enables the community council to look at this issue – I understand that there is an amendment later on which also deals with this issue, and there is an opportunity to debate that matter at that point.

I think it is also worth saying that some of those other things you are talking about, and I do understand that the issue about youth provision, that we also need to look at I think more broadly as part of the pattern of youth provision throughout the borough, and indeed the work that is taking place in terms of youth provision, which is going to be looking at how do we have youth hubs and what comes out of those youth hubs, and how do we make sure that there is a fair, transparent offer which is a lot more that can be shared between, where there is greater access, more people using the youth service; I think this is something which is really important, I think that that may well play a role in terms of resolving the particular issue you are talking about in terms of youth provision in Village ward, so I think there are other ways in which we can do that.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

Given the budget cuts made to after school clubs, what are the projected attendance figures for 2011/12? How many children attended Southwark Council run after-school clubs in 2009/10 and 2010/11?

RESPONSE

In 2009/10 and 2010/11 1,510 places were offered across the council-run after school clubs. In 2011/12 the total number of places offered remained the same.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

I would like to thank the cabinet member for his answer; I just wondered really whether he could elaborate slightly on it perhaps going into detail on any organisational changes which might happen to the provision of after school clubs, whether there have been a reduction in the number of hours that they run for or the range of schemes and activities that are on offer as a result of their reduction in spending on this facility?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Shimell for her supplementary question. Very briefly; as you will know the funding and the responsibility for after school club has largely transferred over to schools rather than local authorities but I will transfer you over to Councillor McDonald to give you a fuller answer.

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Thanks very much but before I do, I must correct the answer that was given in the written answer for which I do apologise. As Councillor Livingstone has said, responsibility has transferred over to schools and in all but two cases they have maintained provision but I learnt this afternoon that Globe Academy and Rotherhithe have decided not to continue that, which I think is a big shame, and I would encourage people to, if they were concerned about that, to speak to those two schools to encourage them to continue offering. The schools we had an agreement with, the schools that they would for the most part therefore continue to offer after school services. They received funding from central government as part of extended schools funding as I am sure you know, and it is up to them to decide whether to continue the funding in exactly the same way or to make changes, so that is not something we control but you will have to ask schools directly.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

Given that you now support giving additional revenue money to community councils, will you now go one step further and support the Liberal Democrat's community chest proposal?

RESPONSE

The Liberal Democrats had eight years in power, whilst government funding was increasing, to implement such a proposal if they had really thought that this was a practicable idea.

Despite the severe cuts being imposed on this council by the coalition government, this administration is going further than the Liberal Democrats did, when they were in power, to devolve revenue decisions to a local level.

There are real challenges with extending it further at this stage. We need to learn the lessons from this initiative in 2012/13 to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this localised approach.

Devolving more money to a local level may lead to duplication of roles where one person is able to cover the borough or at least a number of community council areas. It also diminishes the purchasing power of the council: our ability to use the scale of the council to get the best value for money from contractors and for purchasing goods and services.

The Liberal Democrat amendment is also incorrect in suggesting that cleaner, greener, safer (CGS) capital has been cut: in fact we have increased the total budget by £670,000 over the next ten year period. The proposals we inherited would have resulted in CGS coming to an end in 2015/16, whilst the capital programme agreed by council assembly in July enable this programme to continue until at least 2021.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

I would like to that the cabinet member for his answer but I just wanted to follow up on a couple of those points. Under the Liberal Democrats we had cleaner, greener, safer funding; we had a devolved highways and lighting budget and we had eight community council areas. The community council areas are merging and the Borough and Bankside and Walworth community council areas are going to be representing something like 65,000 residents, quite a lot really; and you are making a lot about this £10,000 revenue budget which the leader has already suggested to me what it should be spent on in Cathedrals ward, and I understand that it has already been suggested by the cabinet what it should be spent on in Dulwich and I wondered, do you really believe that you are devolving power down to communities when you are doing all of that?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Morris for her supplementary question; I think yes we absolutely do. I think it is very clear that we are allocating revenue money to community councils that was not there before. Plenty of people may make suggestions to you about how this money ought to be spent, it is entirely up to you whether you take them up or not and that is the whole point of devolution. People can make suggestions, you take the decisions. So I have to say I don't quite understand what your concern is there, but the point is as I stated here the Liberal Democrats had eight years in power in the years of plenty, this borough was getting plenty of money in, whilst they were doing it and for some reason now that their government is cutting massive amounts from our budget they seem to think there is more money to push their direction. That just isn't realistic, it isn't sensible, it doesn't enable the council to achieve the economies of scale that we sometimes need to get the best value of money for our council tax payers and I don't think it is a sensible solution at this stage.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

In 2010 Southwark had the 3rd cleanest streets in London. How is this currently being measured? Where does Southwark currently stand in the league tables and will you reverse the cuts to the night cleaning and street cleaning teams?

RESPONSE

The current government abolished almost all national indicators, including the one that related to street cleaning (NI195). Despite this, we have continued to measure the cleanliness of our streets utilising the same methodology as that in place for NI195 to ensure we continue to receive truly comparable data. The inspections are done in collaboration with Lewisham, Lambeth and Greenwich with officers from each authority inspecting a number of sites on behalf of the others.

Under the inspection regime, both litter and detritus is assessed and 300 streets are inspected during each inspection.

Results so far this year are as follows:

- Litter - 6% of roads inspected found to be unacceptable
- Detritus - 9% of roads inspected found to be unacceptable.

As the national indicator that measured street cleanliness was scrapped by the current government, we are unable to compare our results with those of other boroughs across London as they are no longer published.

Considering the scale of the budget reductions we have been forced to implement, these results compare quite favourably with our previous results with litter showing just a two percentage point fall in standards and detritus holding at last year's level.

Whilst we do not take fall in standards lightly, we believe that the street cleaning team has risen to the challenge admirably and helped minimise the impact of the regrettable but unavoidable reduction in funds for this service area.

We will of course keep cleanliness standards under close scrutiny.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you for your answer. In formulating your budget with further cuts to street cleaning you must have been advised of the predicted future levels of roads that will have unacceptable levels of litter and detritus. Could you please share with us what those predicted levels are?

RESPONSE

I have to say I personally don't have – thank you very much for your supplemental question by the way. I personally don't have those details to hand, I think there is probably some figures that we can get to you and we can share those with you subsequent to the meeting and I think that is the most sensible way of doing that. I think there is a real shame here; I mean I know lots of people in government are very sniffy about targets and things but there is a real problem here that it is becoming harder for us to benchmark our performance against other local authorities now that these standard measures are being removed, so the piece of work that you have asked for, in terms of how we can rank ourselves against other local authorities is going to become increasingly impossible and I think that is a bit of a shame we can't measure ourselves more effectively against other local authorities.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

What will the grades be of the new 21 director posts that the leader is currently proposing? How will this impact on the budget?

RESPONSE

The net impact of these changes will be to reduce the council's expenditure on its senior staff by £1 million. This is the key driver of the proposals that the leader has proposed and is consulting on.

Those proposals identify a tier of senior officers below the level of strategic directors, equivalent to the current heads of divisions. The proposal is that these second tier posts would remain at the current grades.

The suggested title for these posts at the moment is 'director' but the decision on whether this should be the final nomenclature will be an outcome of the consultation process.

Our top priority in this reorganisation is to ensure that it realises the proposed £1 million saving.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to thank the cabinet member for the answer to my question. I was particularly interested in the last paragraph of his reply where he says our top priority in this organisation is to ensure that it realises the proposed £1 million saving, shouldn't our top priority be to ensure that the council is run effectively and efficiently?

RESPONSE

I think our twin top priorities are doing both, Councillor Hubber. Clearly we will not be going somewhere if it means that falls apart but I would like to thank you for the supplementary question; it will be something that will be obviously uppermost in our mind when the consultation period on this finishes and the final decisions are made.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Can the cabinet member for resources confirm that "merge management and redesign two council run day centres for older people" is not code for closing one or more of the remaining 2 council run day centres for older people?

RESPONSE

The £100,000 savings in 2012/13 are being delivered in a way as to protect front line service provision at both centres. There is a further commitment to work with the users of the projects, who now primarily are older people living with

dementia, along with their carers to modernise day opportunities and respite support.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Thank you. Can I thank the cabinet member for his answer, but I must press him again I'm afraid, because his answer at best appears to be evasive. Can he confirm that neither Southwark Park nor Fred Francis will be closed and that consultation is not already happening at these day centres with staff or service users and if he is unable to confirm that could the cabinet member for health and adult care confirm that?

RESPONSE

Thank you for the supplementary; I think this probably is a question that is better answered by the cabinet member for health and adult care.

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Thank you Councillor Noakes. I can confirm that what they are trying to do, two things, we are trying to make savings and give the best service we can to people who are using both the day centres. Our priority is also to actually explore ways of actually delivering the best for those people, especially with dementia which is a growing problem in our community at the moment. We are looking at the budget of course; as you know we haven't got a lot of money. We are making the best use of the money that we have got, but we are also trying to explore ways of saving money but also trying to make sure we offer the best service that we can to people who actually use the current day services. So at the current time we don't have any plans to close either of those at the moment.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Will the cabinet member spend £8,000 on a lollipop person instead of deputy cabinet members?

RESPONSE

Under the Liberal Democrats' administration, this council's special responsibility allowance budget for councillors went up every year. In contrast, we have cut £100,000 from this allowances bill since coming to office. This has included cutting the size of the cabinet – a step never taken by the last administration.

Furthermore, we have introduced a new cleaner, greener, safer revenue fund, expanding the powers of community councils well-beyond those that they held under the previous administration, which local communities would be able to choose to spend on school crossing patrols.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Thank you Madam Mayor. I would like to thank the cabinet member for his reply. My question focuses on two areas, neither of which were answered. One on lollipop ladies, which are the basic services our residents expect and expect us to get right, and the other part on deputy cabinet members which are not. In fact they are frivolity we can ill afford and it is no surprise he does not make a single effort to defend them in his answer.

My question is this; we sit at the end at a very successful Southwark LGBT History month, a key plank of this borough's heritage programme. I would like to know what was the involvement of the deputy cabinet member for heritage in LGBT History Month, and if he is unsure what on earth is the point of this council funding a deputy cabinet member for heritage?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Gettleson for his supplementary question. We have talked a great deal about lollipop ladies in the past and crossing wardens and you know very well what the situation is on that and how community councils can choose to address that.

I have to say when it comes to lectures from the Liberal Democrats about special responsibility allowances I am slightly aghast. Now I don't actually point out Councillor Gettleson on this issue because clearly he wasn't here at the time, but those colleagues of his that were around before 2010 put the special responsibility allowances bill up and up and up year on year, it has been up to our administration to actually reduce that bill. What the question is about is what we spend on special responsibility allowances. I am not the person that various deputy cabinet members are responsible to, you probably want to take those questions elsewhere, I am not in the position to answer that personally because I have no responsibility in terms of that particular area of the council, but what I am pointing out is I do find it very rich that we hear all the time from the other side 'you need to do more to cut special responsibility allowances' when we have cut it by £100,000 and they continued to go up under the previous administration and you know we have put our money where our mouth is, its a shame the Liberal Democrats did not when they were in office.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

How much revenue funding for community councils has been provided for community councils for 2012/13? How much was allocated in 2009/10 and 2010/11? Please include the community fund as part of your answer.

RESPONSE

Until we brought our proposal to introduce a cleaner, greener, safer revenue fund this year, which will be allocated to community councils depending on their size at a rate of £10,000 per ward, the only revenue spending that community councils had power to commit was the community fund, which is worth £15,000 per community council.

Community Council	2009/10	2010/11	2012/13
Bermondsey	£15,000	£15,000	£45,000
Borough & Bankside	£15,000	£15,000	£35,000
Camberwell	£15,000	£15,000	£45,000
Dulwich	£15,000	£15,000	£45,000
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	£15,000	£15,000	£45,000
Peckham	£15,000	£15,000	£30,000
Rotherhithe	£15,000	£15,000	£40,000
Walworth	£15,000	£15,000	£45,000

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Thank you Madam Mayor, and thank you to the cabinet member for his answer and also well done for getting through so many questions this evening; and here is another one.

Obviously you speak with some evident pride in your answering devolving the extra £210,000 to local people to make decisions in the borough and people on the face of it might get very excited and think that somehow the party opposite believe in devolution; but I do notice something odd in removing grant funding for the highways and lighting budgets for local areas and also cuts for cleaner greener safer grants schemes. Should residents understand from the kind of giving with one hand and the taking away of much larger sums with other that actually the party opposite believes that Tooley Street rather than local residents knows best when it comes to spending taxpayers' money?

RESPONSE

Well as I said the answer makes clear that we are devolving revenue to local community councils and we are discussing revenue here rather than capital; and your questions in terms of other things are related to capital. I think that as you will see from my response to Councillor Morris's question, it is worth reminding ourselves that actually we are not decreasing the overall amount of money that is going to cleaner, greener, safer. The ten year capital programme we agreed in July last year actually extends the amount of money by I think it is £670,000, and ensures that it continues for ten years up to 2021 whereas previously it would have ended in 2016. We have actually shown a commitment to cleaner, greener, safer by putting more money in there and ensuring that it has a longer life than those plans we inherited.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

In the light of the proposal to use £4.4 million of balances to support the 2012/13 revenue budget (up from £3.4 million in 2011/12 and up from £2.8 million in the indicative 2012/13 budget approved by council assembly on 22 February 2011) would the cabinet member for resources and community safety explain why the cabinet has not followed the advice of the finance director set out in paragraphs 39 ("the finance director recommends the retention of contingency and

maintenance of balances,,") and 194 of the report to cabinet, and what assurances can he provide to council assembly that the cabinet's budget proposal is prudent and robust?

RESPONSE

Paragraph 39 states:

"The finance director recommends the retention of contingency and maintenance of balances to mitigate these funding risks in addition to risks inherent in achieving such high savings targets."

Paragraph 194 states:

"As a result of the unprecedented reductions in government grant for 2011/12, and the short notice given by the government to identify savings, reserves were used to support the 2011/12 budget setting process. Given the unprecedented nature of the circumstances facing the council, the finance director recognises the need to use limited balances while strategies and plans are put in place to deliver service changes that match resources available. He also recognises that the contributions from balances must be limited as the use of balances cannot be sustainable in the long term as they become exhausted."

The budget proposed is consistent with both of these statements: it uses reserves in a limited and sustainable way and retains contingency at the current level. I can confirm I have checked with the finance director that he agrees this is the case.

Given that this is highly unlikely to be the last year that our budget will be cut by government and given the pressures already emerging for 2013/14 including the localisation of council tax benefits, it is important that we take a balanced view on the use of reserves and this we have done. We must use them sensibly and not seek use them to make up in the short term for government cuts, simply delaying the inevitable and leaving the council extremely exposed to further cuts in the future. At the same time contingency provides us with a cushion as we carry out the most significant cost reduction and efficiency programmes that the council has ever undertaken in the light of the net decreases in our grants from central government in these and future years. As in 2010/11, unused contingency can always be returned to reserves where it can support valued front line services and help mitigate risks contained within the cost reduction programmes.

This is of course in contrast to the Liberal Democrat proposal this evening to reduce the contingency budget. This might just about be sustainable in 2012/13, but would result in having to make larger savings in services in future years whilst whittling down reserves to a dangerously low level.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

With reference to the proposed saving of £50,000 on school crossing patrols (p60, council assembly agenda) would the cabinet member for resources and community safety refer to:

- (a) the letter dated 13 January 2012 from the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling to Councillor Lewis Robinson in which:
 - (1) it is stated: "The £50,000 reduction in the school crossing patrol service budget at light controlled crossings in 2012/13 will be confirmed and the crossings affected are set out in the attached schedule"; and
 - (2) the attached schedule includes "Dulwich Hamlet: Dulwich Village/Turney Rd"; and
- (b) the letter dated 27 February 2012 from the head of community engagement to Councillor Lewis Robinson in which it is stated: "The crossing patrol at Dulwich Village/Turney Rd will continue and Councillor Hargrove has also confirmed that this was his understanding";

and would he therefore explain why, and under what powers, there was between 13 January and 27 February a decision to depart from the policy on light-controlled crossings in respect of Dulwich Village/Turney Rd, and not in respect of the two other Dulwich crossings mentioned in the schedule to the 13 January letter, namely "Alleyns/JAGS: East Dulwich Grove/Townley Rd" and "Dulwich Village: Dulwich Village/Village Way"?

RESPONSE

The inclusion of "Dulwich Hamlet: Dulwich Village/Turney Rd" was an administrative error, arising from its inclusion in the proposed list before a road safety risk assessment was carried out. The decision to reinstate the crossing patrol to the Dulwich Village/Turney Rd crossing was made after a site visit by the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling and a request which was supported by the recommendation of that road safety risk assessment to do so. The road safety risk assessment did not make any such recommendation for either East Dulwich Grove/Townley Rd or Dulwich Village/Village Way.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Livingstone, for the answer. Would you also agree that the same administrative error was contained in a letter from the head of public realm to the head teachers in the relevant area of my ward dated 14 December and how could he really sustain that such a thing occurring on 14 December and on 13 January by two quite highly paid responsible people; one an officer and one, one of your colleagues, Councillor Hargrove, could truly be described as an administrative error, and finally would he thank me for not probing on any other similar errors which have been made in this sorry affair?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Eckersley for his answer; he is referring to various bits of correspondence that I have not been sighted on, it might be better if Councillor Hargrove could provide him with a response on that matter.

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING

I would like to thank the member for his question and I am going to tell him emphatically, back in May last year I went to Turney Road crossing and I came back and said I don't want that crossing patrol to be removed, and that is absolutely the case. It was an administrative error and I hold my hand up on that. There was an appendix to a letter and I did not properly look it down and Turney Road was in there. We admit to that. I would like to see the copy of the correspondence that you had because it does concern me that there has been a repetition of this administrative error and we will get back to him on that if he would like to send them on to me.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MITCHELL

With reference to the proposed growth (p52, council assembly agenda) of £210,000 for a Cleaner Greener Safer (CGS) revenue fund and to the proposed saving of £50,000 on school crossing patrols (p60, council assembly agenda) would the cabinet member for resources and community safety refer to:

1. The letter dated 5 December 2011 from the leader of the council, which stated: "There is no reason why the patrols should be subject to an annual bidding process - Dulwich councillors would be entitled to make a spending commitment through to 2014 if they so desire";
2. the leader's e-mail dated 27 January 2012 which has had wide public circulation and which refers to a "guarantee" of CGS revenue funding until "at least 2014"; and
3. the letter dated 27 February 2012 from the head of community engagement to Councillor Lewis Robinson in which it is stated: "It is therefore the intention that the funding carries on for more than one year. This is of course subject to the annual decision-making process on CGS revenue that each community council will carry out....";

and would he therefore explain why the wordings of (1) and (2) above have not been reflected in the definitive guidance on CGS revenue procedures?

RESPONSE

Councillor Mitchell will be aware that all funding is subject to the annual decision of council assembly at its budget meeting. As a result community councils will, as a point of process, need to confirm their cleaner, greener, safer revenue fund on an annual basis. However, just as the cabinet has the strongest possible political commitment to the fund in future years and has demonstrated as such by making it part of the base budget, community councils are able to make a similarly strong political commitment to funding items of spending in future years.