

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY  
(ORDINARY)**

**WEDNESDAY JANUARY 30 2008**

**MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

**1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI**

Can the leader outline what the council is doing to increase participation in the democratic process?

**RESPONSE**

The council has helped to increase local voter registration by 10% since 2002. In real terms, this is an increase from 173,717 to 191,486.

The vehicles for increasing participation in the democratic process are electoral services, community councils and community involvement and development unit. Electoral services, for example, has an outreach function, in accordance with section 69 of the Electoral Administration Act. The focus of the work has been to provide young people with democracy education, encourage them to register, and in the longer term how to be active citizens.

Recent initiatives have included the following:

- approximately 400 students were involved in about 60 in-depth sessions held in class, with the active involvement of councillors
- over 1,000 students and pupils were involved in elections for school councils in two schools.
- work with youth groups, facilitating contact between the minister responsible for electoral matters and a youth group in Camberwell
- participation in the inter-departmental youth participation group, offering our services to enhance the process of ensuring involvement by all young people

**2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ALTHEA SMITH**

Does the leader believe that there will be an above inflation increase in council tax this year?

**RESPONSE**

The executive recommended on the December 18 2007 that chief officers prepare budget proposals for 2008/09 in line with the principles of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS). One of the key principles of the MTFS is to maintain council tax increases within inflation levels.

**3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER**

Can the leader inform assembly of how many times in each of the last five years the town hall or other council buildings have been used for surgeries by local Members of Parliament?

**RESPONSE**

Over the last 12 months local Members of Parliament have used the following council buildings on a total of 52 occasions as follows:

Southwark Town Hall	Harriet Harman	33 times
Kingswood House	Tessa Jowell	11 times
East Dulwich Community Centre	Tessa Jowell	8 times

The number of occasions for each of the previous four years is 44 as Tessa Jowell had previously used non-council accommodation for the surgeries now held at the East Dulwich Community Centre (since January 2006).

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

Does the executive member for regeneration's intention to take up full time employment with Lexington Communications, representatives of Balfour Beatty, BeeBee Developments, Wharf Land Investment, Places for People Developments and Gladedale Group make his current position untenable?

**RESPONSE**

No, the executive member for regeneration took advice from the council's legal team as soon as he accepted an offer for employment from Lexington Communications on how he should handle the potential for any conflict of interest. He has agreed with his future employers that he will not be involved in any matters which affect Southwark, and had decided even before he took advice that he would resign from his current position as soon as practical in order to prevent any difficulty arising.

Councillor Thomas was advised that there was nothing inconsistent with him remaining in his current role until his intended resignation date. He agreed with the council's monitoring officer that any potential conflicts of interests would be managed by both him and the senior officers ensuring that he did not take part in any decisions involving the clients of his new employer, and by making an announcement of his move as soon as reasonably possible.

The council's monitoring officer is satisfied that he has acted completely properly in relation to this matter.

**4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL**

Can the leader outline what work is being done in the borough to provide homeless people opportunities to gain permanent work?

**RESPONSE**

The lack of a stable home is one of the most potent barriers to employment and Southwark Council is committed to providing targeted assistance to our most vulnerable

residents to help them reach their full potential. The council, through Southwark works and supporting people commissions a number of programmes which target clients who need extra help in living independently, and that help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents access employment and training.

Examples of Southwark's projects through supporting people (SP) and employment services include:

- St Giles Trust funded through the homeless grant to provide housing support to 150 clients over the next year
- Thamesreach Bondway newly commissioned to support 90 vulnerable people in sustainable employment over the next three years.
- Gateway Foyer – a supporting people funded young persons provider offering accommodation based support to 119 young people at any one time seeking to access education and training.
- The advocacy project – offers a link to housing and homelessness support services
- Ex-offender and drug project – Works alongside Ellison House Hostel to ensure homelessness is addressed as part of the route way back into work.

The opening of the Southwark Homesearch Centre on December 19 2007 provides a further opportunity to make direct service links between housing advice, debt advice and employment advice. The community housing service will be working to develop a seamless response to homelessness and worklessness in partnership with local and national employment advisory services.

## **9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARY FOULKES**

On what date did the leader first know that the Aylesbury estate regeneration faced funding pressures? On what date did the leader first inform the executive member for regeneration that the Aylesbury estate regeneration project faced funding pressures? In what format did he communicate these problems to the executive member?

### **RESPONSE**

The government announced the draft funding settlement for local government on December 7 2007. Under the settlement, Southwark will receive grant increases of 2%, 1.75% and 1.5% in each of the next three years. This is significantly below the rate of inflation, which currently stands at 4.1%. This difference results in a significant shortfall in the council's funding, equating to around £30 million over the three year period.

All members of the executive, including the member for regeneration have been working since the settlement was announced to resolve this funding shortfall and balance the council's budget. In addition, I have made a number of representations directly to the Department of Communities and Local Government about the flaws in the funding formula which have resulted in the shortfall. These representations have focussed on errors in the estimate of Southwark's population and flaws in the formula for allocating funding for social care.

We are confident that we will be able to secure significant back office efficiencies to mitigate the negative impact of the settlement. However, it will not be possible to balance the council's budget without any impact at all on frontline services. The executive has therefore decided to look at all areas of expenditure and all departments for potential savings. No final decisions have been made about which options will be taken.

It is in this light that the Aylesbury regeneration project, like all other areas of discretionary spending, is facing funding pressures. It is only because of the poor settlement which the government has chosen to give Southwark that the executive is being forced to consider the future of the Aylesbury project. I am aware that the executive member has been working with local residents and councillors on a cross party basis to secure the continuation of the project.

**5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS**

Will the leader explain what representations have been made to the government by him and other executive members about Southwark's local government grant settlement?

**RESPONSE**

I, together with other members of the executive, have taken a variety of steps to lobby the Department of Communities and Local Government with regards to the poor settlement which Southwark has received. These steps include:

- Letter sent to and meeting with Southwark Members of Parliament to explain the government's settlement.
- Meeting with John Healy, Minister for Local Government, to discuss our concerns about flaws in the funding formula.
- Responses provided to the government consultation on the provisional settlement to raise our concerns about the inaccurate population estimates and flaws in the methodology for calculating social care funding.
- Letter to the Secretary of State for Health about the impact of changes to social care funding.
- Letter to lead members for health and social care from other London authorities about the impact of changes to social care funding.
- Attending a finance settlement summit at the House of Commons.

**6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON**

Will the leader provide assembly with an update on the status of proposals for Surrey Square Park?

**RESPONSE**

Surrey Square Gardens will not be used as a location for housing. Following a series of consultative meetings with local residents groups and a detailed benefits analysis of the proposals it has been decided to pursue option 1 of the Issues and options report. This option seeks to retain and improve the quality of the open space for the benefit of local residents. We are keen to meet with local resident groups to discuss how, through our open spaces strategy, we are best able to do this.

**7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY**

Will the leader update assembly on the achievements of Southwark's pupils in the recent round of Key Stage 2 tests?

**RESPONSE**

Primary school pupils in Southwark have achieved the best ever results at Key Stage 2 and are moving ahead faster than other students in the country. Southwark results have

increased at twice the rate above the national average for english and maths and three times for science.

Results for Southwark pupils have shown a sustained improvement for the last 5 years in all three subjects, closing Southwark's gap with national Key Stage 2 standards. This includes a two percentage points increase both in English and maths, while science has improved by three percentage points. This compares to the national average increase of just one percentage increase across each of the three subjects.

The excellent progress is also reflected in the Southwark primary schools who have outstanding contextual value added (CVA) scores. Ten Southwark primary schools are ranked in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally for CVA - with Coburg primary school heading the Southwark group. Southwark also had a further 20 schools in the top 25 per cent in the country for this measure.

This year's other exceptional achievements include Ilderton primary school with a 24 per cent aggregate improvement across the three core subjects and ranked in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally for CVA.

These results are extremely pleasing for the borough and are of a result of much hard work. They demonstrate that are our pupils are improving in leaps and bounds and that our schools are adding value at each stage of our children's education.

**10. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES GURLING**

Can the executive member for leisure, culture and sport inform council of the travel time to the London 2012 Athletics Track from a) Sydenham Hill Station, b) Queen's Road, Peckham Station and how this compares to major cities in the UK and Europe?

**RESPONSE**

The travel times and distances are as follows:

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>Time Taken</b>	<b>Distance (kms)</b>	<b>Kph</b>
Sydenham Hill	1 hr 35 mins	23.69	14.96
Queen's Road, Peckham	1 hr 09 mins	12.07	10.06
Manchester Piccadilly	2hrs 58 mins	338.43	114.07
Paris	2 hrs 20 mins	780.44	334.47
Berlin	3 hrs 12 mins	763.22	238.44

**11. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU**

Will the executive member for leisure, culture and sport provide details of how much finance has been given to Southwark by central government in order to promote tourism and cultural events during the 2012 Olympics? Can she provide a breakdown by community council area?

## **RESPONSE**

Southwark Council has received no funding from central government or other sources to promote tourism and cultural events during the 2012 Olympics. Officers are working with various groups and organisations to access funds through the legacy fund and any other future funding programme that may come into being for this purpose.

### **12. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER**

What is the additional cost to the library service of the extended opening hours at Dulwich, Newington and John Harvard libraries?

## **RESPONSE**

The library service has achieved this service improvement by continuously reviewing staff hours and rotas and therefore has improved the services at no additional cost to the council.

### **13. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI**

How much money did the council receive from the organisers of the Tour De France Grand Depart event in recognition of the fact that Southwark hosted part of the route?

## **RESPONSE**

A total of £17,030 was received from Transport for London for specific items requested by them for the Tour de France event. In addition to this, £2,000 was received from the London in Bloom organisers and £2,000 from the "Some Other Way Forward" invest to save programme for ancillary events. The Southwark element of the Tour de France event programme attracted £20,000 from traders concessions.

### **14. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER**

Can we be confident that the library service is fully prepared to maximise the benefits of the National Year of Reading?

## **RESPONSE**

The National Year of Reading 2008 will be an excellent opportunity to promote the library service and we intend to maximise all opportunities to showcase our services and engage with the community and encourage them to be active library users. The year will enable the library service to promote books and reading in partnership with other services to deliver a month by month programme of events and promotions that will have wide appeal.

Southwark is launching its year long programme on January 30 2008 when Michael Rosen, the children's laureate will be our special guest at our launch event at Dulwich library. Michael will be entertaining 180 local school children at the library and launching our first promotion of the year "We loved these books!" great titles recommended by library staff.

**15. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK**

What feedback has been received in response to the recent consultation exercises regarding the improvements to Dulwich Leisure Centre and Surrey Docks Water Sports Centre?

**RESPONSE**

The feedback from the recent consultation about the improvements has been very positive. In the case of Surrey Docks Watersports Centre, where the council has allocated £2.3 million for investment, 12,000 letters were sent out to local residents and to existing customers of the centre. This resulted in 512 responses.

Those who expressed a view welcomed the council's initiative. Of the responses, 60% were from local residents who do not currently use the centre but would like to in future, 20% were from current customers and the final 20% did not say if they were currently customers or not.

The intention behind the refurbishment of Surrey Docks Watersports centre is to provide watersports training facilities of the highest quality and to provide other services which are complementary to them. The aim is to make the centre vibrant, appealing to a wider customer base than it has hitherto attracted, so that more people will visit the centre and learn about watersports.

People who responded to the postal consultation were asked to say which services, that could be delivered from the centre, they would be interested in. A new gym received 387 votes, watersports tuition 383 votes, sailing 358 votes and exercise classes 345 votes. At the centre's open day on November 24 2007 staff were available to answer questions on the draft plans which were on display. In addition to regular users of the centre, a number of visitors said they had never previously been to the centre but would come and use the gym, many also said that they would like to have the opportunity to try sailing, canoeing or sailboarding as well, but had previously been put off thinking it was "too difficult to learn".

At Dulwich Leisure Centre 26,000 letters were sent out to local residents and 6,500 to regular customers of the centre. Almost 2,300 responses were received of which about 1,300 identified themselves as customers of the centre. Once again, all those who expressed an opinion welcomed the future development. In terms of votes for facilities 212 said they were interested in a refurbished pool; 1,796 wanted to use the gym; 1,768 voted for exercise classes and 1,324 wanted rooms for treatments (massage, physio and other therapies). All these are now included in the current plans for the centre.

Other suggestions made which have been included in the current draft plan include a cafe; soft play and creche facilities; full disability access; family changing rooms and a focus on energy efficiency and sustainability. Once again, this was borne out by the people who visited the open day. Some people asked a number of detailed and technical questions; mostly they said that they were very glad that the pool and other facilities were finally going to match the high standard of the gym they already have. A number of visitors also thanked officers for the quality of the consultation programme.

**16. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN**

Are final figures available for participation levels in this year's summer reading challenge in libraries?

## **RESPONSE**

A total of 3330 Southwark children participated in the Big Wild Read: The Summer Reading Challenge which was run in all libraries from July to September 2007. This scheme is run nationally and it is a great way to keep children reading, learning and enjoying activities at their local libraries throughout the summer holidays.

Since the Summer Reading Challenge started in 2004 we have seen a 62% increase in the number of children taking part and a 45% increase in those who completed the challenge. A report from the Reading Agency on the progress of the Summer Reading Challenge indicates that Southwark has a higher level of participation than other London authorities where the trend has been decreasing.

More girls than boys take part in the Southwark Challenge but it is encouraging that the number of boys is increasing each year. This year 1738 girls and 1295 boys took part compared with 1635 girls and 1235 boys in 2006.

Libraries will be aiming high in 2008 to exceed the results of 2007. The theme of this year's Summer Reading Challenge is sport and plans are already underway to provide an exciting range of events to promote the challenge to all children in the borough and make it a key aspect of our programme for the National Year of Reading 2008.

### **17. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON McGOVERN**

Before the last election the controlling group made pledges to keep council tax under inflation and bring all the boroughs leisure centres up to a 21<sup>st</sup> century standard. Now we see speculation in the press that in order to do the first the council may be willing to close three leisure centres. Can the member assure me that the executive will stick to all of its pre-election pledges by guaranteeing the future of all of the borough's leisure centres? Can she also assure me that the centres will undergo all planned improvements and that current levels of service will not be cut?

## **RESPONSE**

The council has allocated £12.3 million for the refurbishment of all its current leisure centres and has pledged to provide new centres in the regeneration programmes for Elephant & Castle and Canada Water. The design and build bids for the refurbishment programme have been received and we aim to appoint a contractor shortly. In the first phase of the programme, Dulwich Leisure Centre and Surrey Dock Watersports Centre will be fully re-furbished at an approximate cost of £5 million and £2.3 million, respectively. Essential work is also being undertaken on Camberwell Leisure Centre in order to keep it fully operational whilst a sustainable long-term solution is sought. Essential work has also been undertaken on Elephant & Castle Leisure Centre and Seven Islands Leisure Centre, in order to keep them operational. A full refurbishment of these centres will follow in phase two of the refurbishment programme. The aim of all the above is to continue improvement of the service, not diminish it in any way.

### **18. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR MACKIE SHEIK**



Will the executive member for resources indicate how Southwark's position on the index of deprivation has been reflected in Southwark's local government grant settlement?

#### **RESPONSE**

The index of multiple deprivation (IMD) is not directly used in the calculations of general grant (i.e. relative needs formula) for local authorities. As a result, Southwark's position on the list of most deprived authorities is not reflected in the increase in grant which it has received. I understand that the leader of the council has made representations about this inconsistency to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Its main use in the funding received by Southwark is in respect of the working neighbourhoods fund. It has also been used as allocation methodology in some other funding. Within the dedicated schools grant, IMD has been used for 2008-11 to allocate funding to "pockets of deprivation" in less deprived local authorities; Southwark did not receive any of this funding.

#### **19. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR JELIL LADIPO**

Will the executive member outline what impact the number of high-rise blocks has on the calculation of the housing revenue account subsidy?

#### **RESPONSE**

We receive subsidy allowances for each housing revenue account property, an addition for debt charges and a deduction for rent that we are expected to raise locally.

The main impact of the number of high rise blocks on housing revenue account subsidy shows in the maintenance allowance we receive from government, where the basis of calculation was changed in 2004/05. In 2003/04 each of our high rise flats attracted £1,662 per annum in maintenance subsidy, 33% above our average allowance of £1,248 per property.

The new maintenance allowance basis from 2004/05 has less weighting for high rise flats. In 2008/09 high rise flats attract £1,400 in maintenance subsidy, 99.7% of our average maintenance allowance of £1,404 per property. Thus the government contribution for each high rise flat has fallen by £258 since 2003/04, making a total loss of £2.8 million p.a. on those flats, which make up 27% of our stock.

#### **20. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR ANNE YATES**

Will the executive member for resources explain the impact of the calculation formula for children and younger adults social services on Southwark's local government grant settlement?

#### **RESPONSE**

The formula grant methodology for children and younger adults social care changed in 2006. Southwark – along with other London boroughs - has repeatedly argued that the changes made to the formula for social care were flawed:

- The new formula for younger adults fails to address the reality that social care clients in city centre areas are more likely to have multiple and complex needs.

- The new formula does not contain a sufficient number of indicators to reflect the wide range of multiple needs of the most vulnerable clients.
- In addition, the sample group of authorities used to derive the formula for younger adults (18) is too small.

In the short term, the government introduced ‘damping’ to mitigate the impact of the formula change by preventing it from being implemented in full.

Exemplifications provided by Department for Communities and Local Government during the formula grant distribution consultation during 2007 showed that without the application of specific block damping, loss to Southwark for 2007/08 grant would have been £38.742m, split as follows:

<b>Funding Sub Block</b>	<b>£m</b>
Children’s	25.011
Younger Adults	13.731
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.742</b>

The specific block damping has now been removed, exposing Southwark to the full impact of the formula change, with only the protection of the overall grant ‘floor’. Without this protection, Southwark would be exposed to a loss of £22m in funding and further if the sub block dampening had not been removed Southwark may well have been above the floor and thus in receipt of a fairer amount of overall support.

The application of grant floors (minimum funding guarantees) means that this impact has been mitigated to a degree for 2008/09 to 2010/11 but leaves Southwark dependant on the floor, whatever that may be for the foreseeable future. In fact there is no guarantee that after 2010/11 that there will even be a minimum funding guarantee.

The guaranteed minimum funding levels still leaves the authority with real terms cuts for 2008/09 to 2010/11 of £4.4m, 5.0m and £5.7m based on current inflation levels. The position gets progressively worse largely as a result of the minimum funding level reducing to 1.8% and 1.5% respectively in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

In addition to the impact on the overall grant settlement received by Southwark, the changes to the formula has a real impact on specific grants that use the same relative needs formula as an apportionment method, examples of this impact are as follows;

<b>Grant</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>£m</b>
Mental Health Grant	-19.3%	-0.302
Child and Adolescent Mental Health	-20.3%	-0.308
Social Care Workforce	-29.0%	-0.441

It is also important to note that because, due to the formula change, Southwark is now so far below the floor, any government recognition of additional population we may gain through our lobbying will take some years to produce any additional grant through the current formula.

**21. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE**

How does the executive member intend to curtail the chronic overspending experienced in quarters 1 and 2 across council departments?

**RESPONSE**

The quarter 2 forecast indicated an adverse outturn variance of £1.6m (0.1% of gross budget). All chief officers are required to take management action to contain forecast overspends. Any adverse outturn variances remaining after management action will be carried forward as a first call against the 2008/9 departmental budgets in line with the council's medium term financial strategy. An updated monitoring position will be reported to the executive as part of the policy and resources report on February 12 2008.

**22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES**

Will executive members have offices in the new building on Tooley Street? How much space in square meters will those offices take up? (Multiply by factor of £420 psm pa £39 psf pa).

**RESPONSE**

On May 2 2007 the executive agreed the acquisition of a new administrative centre to consolidate some 2,100 staff in one location. In respect of executive members it is recognised that they will require the ability to work from the new administrative centre from time to time. As part of the office design and fit out project, therefore, it is proposed that space will be allocated, which is consistent with the council's approach to modern ways of working. As the internal design has not yet been agreed it is not possible to comment on the amount of designated space.

**23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR SANDRA RHULE**

With regard to the new building on Tooley Street, how does the executive member propose to fill the gap between the £168,549,496 to pay the 25 year lease and the amount the council anticipates receiving in asset sales? How much of the £30m asset sales will stay in the area where the assets are being sold to regenerate the area? How much does he estimate will be lost by local businesses when the council moves out?

**RESPONSE**

The business case for the new administrative building is based upon a programme of efficiencies which would not otherwise be achievable without the co-location of a significant number of staff. It is these efficiencies which will fund the annual cost of the new administrative centre, not income from asset sales. In relation to capital generated from asset sales, these will be returned to the corporate capital resource pool which in turn contributes to funding the council's capital programme as approved by the executive, including investment in schools, housing, leisure centres, libraries, transport infrastructure and the cleaner greener safer programme. 100% of the income generated from asset sales will be retained in the borough.

The council's economic development team have confirmed that there will be no significant impact on local businesses when the council vacates a number of buildings, given the continuing growth in these areas including the numbers of residents and associated growth in economic activity. If during the course of this process the council identifies any specific impacts, then it has in place services to offer advice and support.

The economic development team contracts with specialist organisations to provide free business support and advice services including support to existing businesses. The services are delivered by professionally accredited business advisors who work with

businesses on a one to one basis providing them with advice and guidance and supporting those businesses toward economic growth in the current market. Furthermore, a flexible contracting arrangement allows the services provided to react to changes happening in the borough year on year. The type of support that would particularly assist businesses would include: business and financial planning advice, consultation workshops with retailers, advice on property/lease issues, business networking, and supporting business diversification. There is also the potential for businesses to take advantage of the positive aspects of the change, for example increasing turnover through attracting new customers.

**24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE**

How much was spent on conferences, away days and staff events that were not held on council property by the council last year? Please itemise your answer per department. How much would the events have cost if they were held in council buildings (such as Cator Street)?

**RESPONSE**

It was only possible to identify indicative costs spent on conferences, away days and staff events that were not held on council property last year as shown in the table below:

	2006/07
	£'000
Health & Social Care	114
Childrens	404
Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	31
Major Projects	15
Community Housing	6
Environment & Housing	21
HRA	7
Strategic & Corporate	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>624</b>

Council properties are the first choice for these events. However, there are occasions where these properties are not suitable, due to the size or length of the event, the number of people attending or other specific requirements. In Childrens' Services for example, the high level of expenditure is a direct consequence of the need to hold events which involve large numbers of parents, carers and guardians.

**25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE**

Was the executive member aware of the likelihood of a difficult settlement for the next three years before he set last year's budget?

**RESPONSE**

2007/08 was the final year of the government's current spending review. In setting the 2007/08 budget council assembly were made aware of the increasing likelihood that

resources were to be tightened over the medium term. At a local level, as highlighted through the council's robust monitoring procedures, there was upward demand and cost pressures on services making it ever more difficult to balance the budget, achieve efficiencies and maintain council tax increases at the level of inflation. The executive therefore decided to put plans in place to develop policy options/choices that would deliver robust medium term budgets in accordance with council priorities.

The executive agreed in November 2007 the refreshed medium term financial strategy (MTFS), which took account of the outcomes of the government's comprehensive spending review, which itself had been postponed by some fifteen months.

The specific level of resources could not be known with any certainty until the settlement was issued on December, 6 2007.

Furthermore, what could not be anticipated is the degree of severity of impact of the 2008/09 to 2010/11 settlement, particularly on London where 27 of the 33 boroughs in 2008/09 are receiving the minimum level of funding. The main cause of this is the removal of dampening on children's and younger adults sub blocks in the grant formulae (loss of £418.3m in undamped grant for London) resulting in the full implementation of contested and flawed formulae changes that the government chose not to fully implement in 2006/07.

**26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE**

How much does the council currently spend on licenses for software (Microsoft Office, Windows, Adobe Writer, Adobe Photoshop, etc) or how much were they worth when they were transferred to Serco? Could the council save money in the future by switching to the use of open source software?

**RESPONSE**

The council spends £301,000 per year on the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement (a three-year agreement), which covers the Microsoft Office suite of programmes. The cost of operating systems is borne by Serco, as part of the outsource agreement. Other applications are bought on a needs basis by departments. The council has not transferred the licences for software to Serco, although there is capacity in the current contract for the council to novate contracts where that is considered appropriate.

The council has considered the use of open source software, and has monitored its use by other public sector bodies, both in the UK and abroad. The consensus view at this time is that the advantages to be gained are, on balance, too small to make the change. While both open source operating systems and open source office applications are available at "no cost", there are still some issues around the stability of the software, the costs in software maintenance, and in particular the costs in retraining the workforce in their use. Open source software also currently lacks the functionality of proprietary software.

It should be noted that potential savings from changes in software licence arrangements will never be large, even if and when the above issues are resolved. Nevertheless, the council will keep the situation under review, and move into open source software if and when the time is right.

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

20% of the council's revenue expenditure is on staff. In the current financial situation Southwark residents and employees will want to be assured that the council's spending on staffing is fair and prudent. How much will the council spend on consultants in the present financial year? Please itemise your answer by department. How much did pay rises for the top 10% of employees cost the council last year?

**RESPONSE**

The table below shows the latest projected spend on consultants in the present financial year by department:

Department	2007/08 Projected Spend £'000
Health & Social Care	119
Childrens	647
Environment	1,114
Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	364
Major Projects	5,267
Strategic & Corporate	2,000
HRA	1,924
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,435</b>

Pay award / uplift for 2007/8 was the same for all staff 2.475%; because of single status the council does not have differential awards based on seniority.

**28. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR ANDREW PAKES**

How much does the council spend every year on legal fees for lawyers from external firms who are not council officers?

**RESPONSE**

It is estimated that the council will spend around £7.4m on external legal fees – including counsel fees – in 2007/08. This includes contracting legal services for a wide range of specialist services including:

- £2.4 million on housing litigation
- £0.98 million on major projects
- £1.19 million on environment and housing projects (a large part of this on the waste PFI project)

The council seeks to use internal resources and minimise the use of external legal contractors wherever possible.

**29. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY**

How much was spent on decorating offices last year (including all new furniture, paint, etc)? How much of that was spent on offices that will be vacated by the council following the move to Tooley Street?

**RESPONSE**

Over the last financial year, a total of £460,375 was spent on furniture and re-decoration at council offices. In the period 2006/07 a total of £315,665 has been spent on office furniture. Of this figure a total of £87,102 was spent on furniture for offices that are currently planned to be vacated following the move to Tooley Street.

In the same period a total of £144,709 was spent on re-decoration. Of this £19,005 was to office accommodation that is planned to be vacated following the move to Tooley Street.

The expenditure on redecoration to this group of buildings reflects the need to maintain the minimum acceptable working environment at these locations, subject to damage or significant disrepair. This minimal investment in these assets will be reflected in the subsequent sale negotiations.

**30. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER**

What was the insurance value of the council's ICT equipment when it was sold to Serco for £1? Under the contract does the ownership of all new ICT equipment bought by the council until 2012 default to Serco?

**RESPONSE**

The insurance value of the council's ICT equipment sold to Serco was £9.02m, on a 'new for old' basis. The recorded value was approximately £4m. As is normal in contracts of this type, the equipment was sold to Serco as the outsource supplier for a nominal sum, and at the end of the contract the equipment in use at that time would transfer back to the council, again for a nominal sum.

Under the terms of the contract, equipment is no longer purchased by the council but is instead purchased by Serco, depreciated over a defined period within the contract (the period differs for different items), and replaced at the end of the period. The equipment that returns at the end of the contract will therefore will have a similar value to that originally transferred.

**31. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU**

How much is spent on all travel expenses (including car allowances) for executive members?

**RESPONSE**

For the current financial year a total of £5488 has so far been spent on executive member travel made up from train, bus, flights and taxi travel as well as the bike allowance.

Members are not in receipt of car allowances.

**32. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH**

How does the executive member propose to bring down spending on refreshments? Would moving from bottled water to the more environmentally friendly filtered tap water save the council money?

**RESPONSE**

Under the recent funding settlement, Southwark will receive grant increases of 2%, 1.75% and 1.5% in each of the next three years. This is significantly below the rate of inflation, which currently stands at 4.1%. This difference results in a significant shortfall in the council's funding, equating to around £30 million over the three year period. In this light the council is seeking to maximise efficiency and cut costs. As part of this process, the executive will be looking at proposals for cost savings on refreshments.

Furthermore, service options for hospitality catering are being considered as part of the arrangements for the move to 160 Tooley Street. It is possible that these services may form part of a package of bundled services and as with other facilities management service areas it is envisaged a centralised approach to managing catering provision could be extended to all office accommodation and deliver both higher standards and efficiencies.

The costs of purchasing, installing and servicing mains water filtering machines is justified over the long-term as a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative to renting or leasing bottled water dispensers. Mains water filtering machines are the service of choice and are replacing bottled water services where practical.

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

What assistance including possible extra funding has the council given to the Southwark Pensioners Centre to ensure that it stays open and provides vital services to older people in the borough?

**RESPONSE**

The Southwark Pensioners Centre (SPC) is grant aided under the community support programme and the current level of funding for 2007/08 is £126,608. This is the highest award to any group under the community support programme.

First, officers have had several meetings with the organisation to discuss the current financial situation and what is clear is that the financial arrangements in place need strengthening. Therefore, in addition to the £126,608 awarded to the Southwark Pensioners Centre in 2007/8 financial year, the executive member for communities, equalities and citizenship decided that the sum of £3,000 be awarded to SPC to meet the costs of financial support to be provided by Age Concern Lewisham and Southwark.

We will continue to support the organisation to access fundraising from sources other than the council and with developing a clear plan for the future. I am currently working with the management committee and staff of SPC to ensure the sustainability and viability of the organisation.

No 2008/09 funding decisions have yet been made for the community support programme. However, decisions will be made more difficult by the government decision



– announced in December – on area based grant allocation. Within this they confirmed the ending of the seven year neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF) and the replacement of this with the working neighbourhoods fund (WNF). As part of this process, the government significantly reduced the total amount of funding made available to authorities to support deprivation-focussed initiatives.

In 2006-08, NRF allocated to Southwark was £12m, and £10.8m respectively. The WNF allocation for Southwark is £7m each year for a period of three years from 2008/09. In 2008/09 this allocation is £3.8m less than the NRF allocation for 2007/08. This significant reduction in funding will impact directly on the number and size of grants which the council is able to make.

**34. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY**

Would the executive member please confirm that the Elephant & Castle regeneration will safeguard the existing Bakerloo Line tube tunnels extending a short way South East from the Elephant & Castle, and will not in any way prejudice the eventual realisation of a extension of the Bakerloo Line to Camberwell and/or Peckham?

**RESPONSE**

As stated in answer to the question asked by Councillor James Barber on September 12 2007. There are no proposals within the council's adopted Elephant & Castle Development framework which would preclude the possible future southern extension of the Bakerloo Line. However, as was also stated, there is no formal protection provided for these routes through the Southwark Plan.

The implications of the construction of the new homes, shops and offices at the Elephant & Castle upon the capacity of the local public transport system is being fully considered as part of the preparation for the planning application for the central area. Working arrangements have been established with Transport for London and London Underground to facilitate this process and the implications of these discussions will be reported at the appropriate time.

**35. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER**

How much does the executive member's department estimate the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) along the Walworth Road have lost financially as a result of the disruption caused by the redevelopment project? What proportion of this will the council give back to those SMEs in compensation?

**RESPONSE**

We believe that the long term benefits which will arise from the improvements to the Walworth Road far outweigh the short term costs caused by the redevelopment works. As such, there are no plans for compensation payments to businesses.

The improvements to the Walworth Road are wide-ranging and include:

- Safer crossings and streets
- Wider pavements
- Improved lighting
- More trees

- New look
- Improved shopping

The completed project is a significant improvement to the area and has been recognised, even by the opposition spokesperson on the environment as 'beautiful'.

The businesses along Walworth Road were extensively consulted at both design and implementation phases of the project. The works were programmed so that disruption in any one section lasted only for a short period, access to all the shops was maintained at all times during the works and all major works were completed before the Christmas shopping period. Strenuous efforts were made to minimise disruption at all times.

We are looking to engage with businesses following completion of the works, through the agreement of a street management plan and a number of community safety projects targeted at businesses, including the installation of more than 90 alert boxes funded through cleaner, greener, safer. These actions, together with the improved street scene on the road are set to significantly increase footfall and thereby benefit local small and medium enterprises.

**36. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR DANNY McCARTHY**

How does the executive member think that the end of the multimillion pound neighbourhood renewal funding will affect his department and the community?

**RESPONSE**

In December, the government announced the new area based grant allocation. Within this they confirmed the ending of the seven year neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF) and the replacement of this with the working neighbourhoods fund (WNF). As part of this process, the government significantly reduced the total amount of funding made available to authorities to support deprivation focused initiatives.

In 2006-08, NRF allocated to Southwark was £12m, and £10.8m respectively. All recipients were aware that their funding was coming to an end in March 2008. The WNF allocation for Southwark is £7m each year for a period of three years from 2008/09. In 2008/09 this allocation is £3.8m less than the NRF allocation for 2007/08.

This significant reduction in funding will significantly impact on the possibility of repeat funding for NRF funded initiatives. The council allocated NRF funding to a range of deprivation related initiatives across the statutory and voluntary and community sector.

Within the council, NRF has funded interventions particularly in children's services, environment & housing, the deputy chief executive's department, regeneration and neighbourhoods. Within the latter, NRF has primarily supported the development of employment and enterprise services including Southwark works employment service and support for business start up, sustainability and growth. NRF also supports a number of community interest forums currently based within the community involvement and development unit.

The council is currently working through the implications of this with partners on the local strategic partnership (LSP), but as the new WNF is considerably less than the original NRF, there necessarily will be an impact on some services.

**37. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR GORDON NARDELL**

Does the executive member think that scrapping the F and G grades at GCSE would help struggling school children in Southwark?

**RESPONSE**

GCSE grades F and G reflect genuine achievement for a band of pupils, many of whom would otherwise leave school with no accreditation whatsoever. However, it must be recognised that these grades are not viewed in the same light by employers and further education establishments. Indeed, in many circles, grades A\*-C are the only ones which are considered as true 'pass' grades.

I believe it is crucial that we strive to drive educational performance upwards and to secure grades for Southwark students which will have traction with employers and educational establishments. This may mean offering a wider range of alternatives to traditional academic qualifications, seeking to provide qualifications which better reflect particular aptitudes and providing more vocational qualifications.

The primary objective of the Southwark 14-19 strategy is to raise the attainment of all 19 year olds in the borough. The provision of a broad and balanced curriculum is seen as a major priority in achieving this objective. The authority is in the forefront of developing new progression pathways. We will be introducing engineering and creative & media diplomas in September 2008 as well as introducing the young apprenticeship scheme at KS4.

**38. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON**

Could the executive member ascertain from Transport for London (TfL) why the Highwood Barracks bus shelter has not been reinstated, six months after a TfL statement that they are "working to re-install the much needed shelter as soon as possible" and despite repeated requests from council officers and ward councillors?

**RESPONSE**

I share Councillor Robinson's concerns and frustrations. The issue has arisen due to Transport for London's failure to undertake the necessary works to reinstall the bus shelter. Unfortunately the bus shelter is located in the part of the road network managed solely and entirely by TfL.

I have written to the Director of TfL's Borough Partnerships asking him to direct his attention to this matter. I will be happy to update the ward councillors once I have received their reply.

**39. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR JENNY JONES**

Will the council set up specialist recycling facilities in the borough both for low energy bulbs that contain mercury and require specialist recycling, and for tetrapak type cartons?

**RESPONSE**

Southwark has quadrupled its recycling levels in the last four years and we are expecting to beat our target of 20% of waste recycled in 2007/08. There is already a recycling bank at the Sainsburys' supermarket on Dog Kennel Hill for tetrapak cartons and low energy light bulbs containing mercury are currently accepted at the household waste reuse and recycling centre in Manor Place.

The new waste management contract with Veolia Environmental Services Plc will make Southwark a leader in local authority recycling and will deliver year on year increased recycling levels, reaching in excess of 50% by 2021.

Officers are currently in discussions with Veolia exploring the potential for further improvements in recycling facilities offered to residents of Southwark, as well as increasing the range of items that can be recycled. These discussions will examine possibilities for every type of waste currently created in the borough including tetrapaks and low energy light bulbs.

**40. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD**

What are the future plans for the Arbitration Unit? Can we have assurances that this important service will continue to provide an accessible means of compensation and redress for those tenants suffering from unacceptable delays in getting urgent repairs carried out?

**RESPONSE**

Southwark Arbitration Tribunal was established in 1985, as an alternative dispute resolution forum to assist with the number of complaints being received from its tenants and leaseholders, mainly around disrepair issues. This remains the tribunal's focus today, in that the tenancy and leaseholder arbitration tribunals act as an independent arbitrator considering disputes arising from, in the case of tenants, alleged breaches of the tenancy agreement or breaches of the lease with respect to leaseholders.

The tribunal also provides an independent appeals panel for the children's services department on permanent school exclusions and has recently set up an appeals process for the refusal of transport to school also for the children's services department.

A review of the tribunal undertaken in the summer of 2007 looked at its current and future service requirements in the context of the housing strategy. In particular the cost of the service versus the satisfaction received by customers. The number of tenancy applications to the tribunal for the period January 2007 to January 11 2008 was 273. These figures have remained fairly consistent over the years.

The review concluded that given the scale of the work being undertaken to improve the housing service the future need for the arbitration service would change. The council's corporate complaint service is in the process of being restructured and following successful appointment to the post of complaints manager the council will look at how these two services might work more closely together. This will ensure there is a consistent approach to appeal resolution for Southwark, and a consistent approach to the levels of compensation awarded to customers seeking redress for issues relating to housing repairs.

**41. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES**

Can the executive member please quantify in full the gap in funding faced by Southwark Council to finance decent homes works?

## **RESPONSE**

Using the base-case model required for the 2005/06 option appraisal, the investment gap to meet decent homes by 2010/11 is estimated at £62 million.

This gap arises directly from the government decision to restrict the options for funding improvements to only three, none of which reflect the wishes or priorities of local people. The executive does not believe that funding for improvements to council housing should be based on acceptance of forced stock transfer. In addition, we believe that the current decent homes standards are insufficient to meet a wide range of residents' aspirations for their homes.

As a result, the council is working with tenants and residents to seek alternative options which will allow it to provide affordable housing for residents which meet their needs. These options include investing in existing stock, plans to regenerate estates like the Heygate and Aylesbury and investing in 850 new affordable homes each year.

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

How would the Executive Member characterise the quality of the in-house pest control service? Is he content with the service delivery standards at present?

## **RESPONSE**

The pest control service was brought in-house on July 2 2007 in response to increasing resident dissatisfaction and recommendations made by the housing scrutiny sub-committee. The service merged with Southwark Cleaning in the new service area known as Southwark Hygiene Services. From day one, the in-house team has been delivering a better service than that provided by the external contractor and this positive trend has continued month on month.

This is evidenced by the following:

- An additional 10 pest control officers working on our estates
- An additional 6,000 properties receiving regular inspections and treatment under the 'block treatment programme'
- Extended operating hours including limited Saturday appointments
- 85% of requests for assistance are responded to within 24 hours
- Free treatment of bed bugs (chargeable under the previous arrangements)
- Joined up working leading to quicker resolution of complex problems

Although a good start has been made, service development continues with bookings made directly by the customer service centre expected to be in place by the end of February, an extra five staff offering appointments on Saturday due to be in place within four weeks and customer satisfaction monitoring commencing later this month.

Whilst the service is already much improved, there is still much to be done if we are to eradicate pests effectively in this borough. The management team are fully aware of the expectations we have of this service and are working hard to meet them.

It is also worth noting that this improved service has been achieved without the need for additional funds

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

What was the total cost of the "Changing for the Better" programme, including staff time on consultations, redundancy costs, consultancy costs and costs associated with design of a logo and communications activities? Please itemise each cost individually and provide a total figure. Are there any ongoing costs?

**RESPONSE**

Changing for the Better is an ongoing programme for proving housing management and is intended to run for many years. The change programme is the council's response to public calls for improvements to the way housing services operated.

It forms part of the basic business plan and is the way the service does business. As such everything within the housing management service and budget counts as part of the budget of changes for the better. Some posts in housing management are held by full time staff, some by agency and some by consultants. These are all contained within the staffing establishment for housing management, no additional staff were employed as a result of the changes made through the programme.

As one part of the change programme there has been a recent restructure and as a consequence £709,494 of redundancy payments have been made to staff. No costing has been possible in relation to consultation time however sixty meetings with the trade unions and staff were held.

Changing for the Better communication and resident information materials have cost a total of £10,155.

**44. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR OLAJUMOKE OYEWUNMI**

How many vacancies are there for staff posts within what was the housing department? How are these gaps being filled? What is the cost to date of these interim measures within this financial year?

**RESPONSE**

In housing management there are still a number of redeployees that we are supporting through the re-organisation process and they are continuing to apply for vacancies with housing and sustainable services. Some posts that are vacant are being covered by agency staff. We are aiming to reduce the numbers of agency staff by recruiting to our vacancies through internal recruitment in the first instance during 2008. By the end of March all of our redeployees will have either secured alternative employment or have left the council's service so we will commence a second round of recruitment in April and May of 2008.

Deriving the cost of interim measures is complex as it is difficult to distinguish between interim staff that would have been employed had there been no re-organisation and those whose employment has arisen out of restructuring. However, it is possible to report that we are currently forecasting staffing costs to be contained within the allocated (pre restructuring) budgets.

**45. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DOMINIC THORNCROFT**

What percentage of stock on the Aylesbury estate is 'non-decent' according to the statutory standard? If the Aylesbury estate was not to be demolished, how would the executive member propose to bring these properties up to the decent homes standard by the legal deadline?

**RESPONSE**

The estimated level of non-decency on the Aylesbury Estate is 75%, however a full detailed survey would be required to give a more accurate indication of the number of homes failing the decent homes standard. The government standard addresses structural works and internal refurbishment where required, but does not address the wider environmental and security needs of the estate.

If it were not to be demolished, the estate would have to be included in the council's housing investment programme and the cost and resources required would need to be included in the review of decent homes, something which was reflected in the report agreed by the executive at the time of the decision to regenerate the Aylesbury.