

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 25th JUNE 2003

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 3.8 : MEMBERS QUESTION TIME

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

Does the Leader of the Council support a system of floors and ceilings for local Government Finance?

RESPONSE

I don't support the current system of local Government Finance full stop. I had hoped that the Government would use the recent review of local government finance to institute a root and branch review but inevitably, this was not the case.

The current system of local government finance is so confusing and lacking in transparency that accountability for the tax levied is blurred, with very few citizens able to penetrate the Government's use of smoke and mirrors to paint every settlement as generous, regardless of the facts. The Government is short-changing local government all the time and we're having to make up the difference.

Moreover, more money is being transferred away from London and up north than ever before and local authorities are being forced to conform to Government priorities – at the expense of their own – as more cash is diverted into ring-fenced grants.

I would like to see a system of local government finance in the future which provides mainstream grant for local authorities sufficient to ensure the provision of high quality, locally accountable public services. I would also like to see urgent action to reduce the direct impact on council tax payers. This could be done by implementing the £100 council tax rebate proposed in the Liberal Democrat alternative budget, for example and – in the long-term - by replacing the council tax with a local tax based on income, reinstating the principle of progressive taxation, that the more one earns, the more one pays.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

I would like to thank the Leader for answering this question.

However the question was about floors and ceilings which seems to be notable by its absence in the response. There are one or two points he does make that I would like to clarify. He talks about more money; the Government is short changing Local Government, whereas in fact the Revenue Support Grant last round, the total amount of money put in for

Local Government was an increase by the Labour Party of 5.9% which was one of the largest increases that has happened over the last fifteen years. However the question was about floors and ceilings and I would like to ask the Leader if at the Ratification meeting on Monday 18th December 2000, I know it is a long time ago so I hope his memory survives, he remembers that he actually supported the implementation of floors and ceilings in a response to the green paper on Local Government Finance.

RESPONSE

I am sorry to disappoint Councillor Glover but I am afraid that entering into a debate about the best way of making the hugely flawed system of Local Government finance that we have got work, is to me like entering into a debate about the number of angels that can dance on a pin head. The fact is that the system of Local Government finance and Local Government taxation in this country is fatally flawed and rapidly coming round the corner is a Council Tax revaluation in 2007/2008 which is going to make the rate revaluation which the Tory Party fluffed in the mid eighties look like a teddy bears picnic in comparison. One of the huge problems with the Labour Party has always been that it has had a hole in its thinking about Local Government finance and Local Government taxation. One of the reasons why the Tories were able to impose the Community Charge on this country was that there was no viable scheme being put forward by the Official Opposition Party and I do think that the Government rapidly needs to get its thinking in order, about scrapping the Tory Council Tax which is a regressive tax completely unrelated to the ability to pay and looking at long standing Liberal Democrat ideas, like site valuating, like local income tax and I am pleased that both the Labour run ALG and indeed the Government itself have committed themselves to examining not just Council Tax, but other systems of taxation as a replacement for Council Tax. I think none of us in this Chamber can be comfortable about the fact that Band D Council Tax in this Borough has crept up over a £1,000. It was never designed, it was a system of taxation that was not designed to lead to that level of taxation on people. In some parts of the country I know that people are now going on Council Tax strikes because they can't afford to pay the rises that have been levied and it is nothing short of shocking that in London, which has some of the highest rates of child poverty in the country as a result of the Local Government finance settlement that we had this year, money was being taken out of London and sent to other areas and the much vaunted rise in the Rate Support Grant which Councillor Glover supports, £500 million pounds of that has gone missing somewhere between the Department of Education and the schools that are supposed to be getting it.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Could the Leader please confirm whether Southwark is now below the London average in terms of its Council Tax at band D level?

RESPONSE

The average council tax (band D) for the London Area is £1,057.92. As Southwark's band D Council Tax is £1,034.18, it is below the London Average.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

In the light of the Leader's view expressed to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 16th April 2003 that "*consideration might also be given to Community Councils controlling sections of the Revenue Budget*", would the Leader set out his proposed timetable for undertaking such a consideration?

RESPONSE

Consideration will be given to delegation of sections of the Revenue Budget as part of the 6-month review of Community Councils agreed by Executive and Council. Any proposals to delegate further functions in 'phase 2' will ultimately be decided upon by Council Assembly at the next AGM.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE

I understand that on 2nd May 2003 there was a meeting held at the Town Hall in room A8 at 12.30 p.m. between the Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Porter, Bob Coomber, Chris Berry and representatives of Imperial Gardens Nightclub.

What Decisions were reached?

RESPONSE

No decisions were made at this meeting. The meeting took place at Mr. Stevenson's request and concluded with an agreement that the Council would pursue the completion of the District Audit report and would consider a response to Mr. Stevenson's claim for compensation. No response has yet been made in relation to financial compensation other than for the council to offer to pursue financial support for noise abatement works which have been rejected by Mr. Stevenson. The Council's response to Mr. Stevenson will be considered in the light of the Ombudsman and District Auditor's reports.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Is the Leader aware that the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham has managed to exceed “Livingstone’s magic number” (*Housing Today* 16 May 2003) with regard to the provision of more social housing? Can he comment on the figures in the rest of the article which show that many boroughs are working towards the London Mayor’s target of 50% affordable housing?

RESPONSE

I did see the article referred to and was very impressed that an inner London borough had managed to achieve a target of 65% in terms of the proportion of affordable housing units in private housing schemes.

I noted too that many other boroughs have published targets well in excess of Southwark’s target of 25% (Lambeth for example, have set a target of 50%).

Councillor Hubber will recall that our Group did put forward an amendment to the UDP calling for a 50% target on affordable housing. Sadly, this sound amendment was blocked by the two opposition parties.

That said, as far as I am concerned, the existing target of 25% affordable housing in new residential developments is a starting point only.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Question and response lost owing to technical failure.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN FLANNERY

Does the Leader agree with Stephen Byers MP (former Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions) that there should be a level playing field between stock retention and transfer and that this can only be achieved by allowing councils to borrow to fund improvements (Inside Housing, 30 May 2003)?

RESPONSE

Yes I do agree that there should be more of a level playing field for options for bringing in additional funding into council housing. Given the lack of alternatives to transfer and the obligations to meet decent homes, the Government position creates a series of problems for authorities such as Southwark with a large stock in need of investment.

These views have been relayed to the Government in our response to consultation papers such as the London Housing Strategy.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN HUNT

Can the leader throw any light on the previous administration's secret cabal, the so-called War Cabinet, established to plot and control plans for a new railway station at Camberwell New Road; its membership, activities and decisions. And can he assure Council Assembly that any similar group set up by the present executive would be open, transparent and above board; keeping residents and organisations affected by its discussions fully informed, subject only to the requirements of commercial confidentiality?

RESPONSE

I am unable to comment on the so-called War Cabinet since it did a good job of keeping its decisions secret! However, its existence has been reported to me by an external source.

I can certainly give Council Assembly the assurances requested by Councillor Hunt.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

In light of the report in London Bulletin (May/June 2003) that London could lose a huge chunk of the £100m per year it receives in European funding following the Government proposal to end EU regional policy and structural funding for more prosperous member states including Britain, can the Leader advise whether Southwark benefits from any EU funding?

RESPONSE

Southwark does benefit from EU funding. The four main areas that currently benefit from this source of funding are Energy , Environmental Management, Employment Training & Support for School Kids with Emotional Problems. Details of the schemes are shown below:

Environment & Leisure

Zero emission neighbourhoods

Project addresses use of sustainable energy in the Elephant & Castle regeneration

3 year project : Jan 2002 - Dec 2004

Southwark : total project cost £312,000 - EU funding of £128,800

Local Authority Environmental Management Systems & Procurement

Project addresses green procurement and integration of procurement into environmental management systems

3 year project : Nov. 2003 - Oct. 2005 (dependent on contract signature with EC)

Southwark : total project cost £132,300 - EU funding of £62,980

These forms of funding would not be affected by proposals to end structural/regional funding. Funding is secured via competitive calls for projects under themed programmes (energy, environment etc). There is plenty of opportunity for Southwark to secure further such funding.

Regeneration

European Social Fund (ESF) - Community Initiative

The name of the project is Building London, Creating Futures and it is 50% funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The project relates to the training and support for Construction workers across London (Led by Southwark). This scheme started in October 2001 and finishes on the 31st December 2004. The total project costs £2,030,000 with ESF funding of £1,015,000. Though this particular scheme finishes in December 2004 it will still be possible to bid for resources in the future. The money is allocated through Equal, which has guaranteed funds from the EU till at least 2008.

Education & Culture.

Pathways in Peckham

This project runs courses for School Kids with emotional problems, using European Social funds and has been running since November 2001. The

project will finish on the 31 October 2003. The table below shows the ESF funding received or to be received for this project.

Year	Amount
2001	55,622.00
2002	133,498.00
2003	77,872.00
Total	266,992.00

9. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

How many recommendations of the Standards Committee has the Deputy leader supported at full Council Assembly and how many has she opposed since May 2002?

RESPONSE

Standards Committee has made a number of recommendations to Council Assembly over the last year contained in reports on members' allowances, Congestion Charging, Community Councils, appointment of independent members to Standards and, most recently, Council Procedure Rules.

I have always voted with my group on these matters, as I'm sure Cllr John has voted with his. My group – like Cllr John's – has been happy to support Standards' recommendations on the whole though it has also exercised its own judgement of what is wise at other times.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

10. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, SOCIAL INCLUSION & YOUTH FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MOISE

I would like to ask the member if he shares my concern that at the opening of the 'knotted gun' in Peckham to highlight the battle against gun crime-the only politician invited to attend by the Council, other than the members of the Executive , was the Liberal Democrat MP for North Southwark and Bermondsey.

Does he share my concern with the fact that at what should have been a cross party event not even the MP for the constituency at which the event took place Harriet Harman was invited or indeed any other representative from the Labour party.

Can he then tell me why this was?

RESPONSE

The symbolic unveiling of the "knotted gun" in Peckham was organised by Non-Violence UK, as one of a series of evens across London. Non-Violence UK is an international charitable campaigning organisation whose aim is to divert young people from violence.

The Community Safety Unit was the key council contact point for the charity. They checked the proposed site and organised the health and safety clearance.

Confirmation of the date was outside the council's control and the final date of Monday 14th April was only confirmed by the charity on Friday 11 April.

When the idea was originally discussed with Non-Violence UK, it was only envisaged that a limited number of people would attend. As a result, the police, Lucy Cope, who is a member of the local community and the Mums Against Guns organisation, and the Executive Member for Community Safety were invited to take part in a photo call. In the event, I was unable to make the event and asked the Leader of the Council to attend in my place. Simon Hughes attended with him since they were due to meet anyway.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MOISE

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

11. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR KENNY MIZZI

Will the Executive Member outline both the number of permanently employed and supply teachers for each school in the Borough (by each category) for 2002/03 and 2001/02 and will he also state the number of current permanently employed teachers who have given notice of their intention to leave their school this year (in numerical and % terms by school) while also listing the figures of teachers who left employment in Southwark schools in 2001-2002 (by school)?

RESPONSE

Attached are the relevant summary documents from the annual statutory return from schools. Disaggregation by schools in the form requested is labor-intensive despite technological support and could not be achieved within the deadlines stipulated for response to questions. In addition, there is no requirement to maintain resignations data centrally, and this will be difficult to maintain accurately in view of schools' responsibilities in this area. Furthermore the DfES is understandably keen to reduce bureaucracy and this impacts upon LEAs' /Service providers' abilities to request and collate such information.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KENNY MIZZI

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

12. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

How many schools have had their right to a delegated budget suspended? For how long for in each case and what has been or is being done by the LEA to assist these schools?

RESPONSE

Six schools' delegated budgets have been withdrawn.

In the case of one school, delegation was withdrawn this term, with the intention of reinstatement at the beginning of January 2004. This is a pattern of brief withdrawal, which Atkins is keen to promote, whilst putting in place the necessary mechanisms and support to ensure the school's normal and proper operation of the delegated budget and related activities thereafter.

A second school has been out of delegation for two terms and delegation will be returned at the end of the financial year.

In the case of the remaining four schools, the withdrawal has lasted for an extended period, and there remain significant leadership and management issues at those schools which, until resolved, would prejudice reinstatement of their delegated budgets.

Atkins is providing to these schools:

- Senior Management Leadership support;
- Professional HR and Finance support;
- Other professional support related to the particular need of these schools. Newly-formed multidisciplinary officer working parties focused on each school scrutinise the relevant action plans and allocate and oversee the necessary support tasks in each case.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

13. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Could the Executive Member please update Council Assembly on the latest position with regards to Southwark education?

RESPONSE

The Council is currently in negotiations with W S Atkins following their advice in late March that they wished to exit their contract to provide education support services in Southwark by the end of July 2003. These discussions are ongoing. Termination of the contract by the end of July will be dependent upon the Council agreeing acceptable terms with Atkins.

The Council is putting in place contingency plans should the contract with Atkins be terminated, including interim strategic management arrangements and a review of options for long-term arrangements. Details of these plans are set out below. A timeline for the next few months is also attached, which includes a special meeting of Heads and Governors.

Advisory Group

The Council has established an Advisory Group to advise the Council in relation to the interim strategic management contract for education support services and the long-term review of those services. The Advisory Group includes representatives of Southwark headteachers, governors, diocese and also teaching and non-teaching trade unions.

The Advisory Group will advise on the evaluation criteria for the interim contract and the long-term review tenders; participate in and advise the Council on the evaluation of tenders; participate in and advise the Council on the presentations of short-listed tenders; and make a recommendation to the Council on the award of the contracts.

Interim arrangements

An Invitation to Tender and draft contract has been sent to ten potential bidders for interim strategic management arrangements, including three LEAs. Six of these organisations attended a bidders briefing day on Monday 2 June. The closing date for tenders is 23 June and it is hoped a successful provider will be appointed by early July.

Key aspects of the contract for interim strategic management are listed below:

- The contract will be for a twelve months period with break clauses after five months and eight months and ability on the part of the Council to extend to twenty-four months.
- It requires the contractor to directly supply and take direct responsibility for the top 20 management posts of which 6 are currently vacant. These posts will be managerially responsible for all other staff

currently working for Atkins who will transfer to the Council's employ at the termination of the Atkins contract, if this occurs.

- The contractor will largely carry out those functions carried out by Atkins.
- The key tasks include developing educational strategies, ensuring smooth handover and continuity of service at start and end of contract, progressing actions in the Post OfSTED Inspection Action Plan, and addressing poor performance.
- The performance targets will be both outcome and process based. Some will attract bonuses as incentives. Some will attract deductions, and others will attract withholding of payment until the problem is fixed.
- There are clear requirements for liaison and co-operation with all levels of the Council, heads, governors, diocesan authorities, unions and other stakeholders.

Long-term review

The Council, in association with the London Challenge and Professor Tim Brighouse, Commissioner for London Schools, is undertaking a review of options for long-term arrangements for the education service. An Invitation to Tender has been sent to five potential bidders for consultancy work relating to this review. The timescale for the work (completion end September 2003) is proposed to allow the Council to choose and implement the desired option by 1st August 2004 – the intended termination date for the strategic management arrangements.

The key points of the terms of reference are:

- The review should consider all major options for delivering LEA services in the longer term, including in-house, full externalisation and not for profit trusts. The review should aim at an impartial analysis of all the benefits/drawbacks of different models.
- The review should consider changes to the size and nature of LEA functions, including further devolution to schools and different forms of delivery for different services.
- The review should draw heavily on existing practice and experience including a review of some of the key options recently commissioned by the DfES.
- Extensive consultation is required for all stakeholders but particularly with school headteachers.

EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES – DRAFT TIMELINE

Please note:

The Council has not yet agreed to termination of Atkins' contract to provide Education Support Services. The activities identified on the

timeline below make up the Council's contingency plans in relation to possible termination of the contract.

9 June Advisory Group to meet to consider the marking/evaluation criteria for the interim and long-term review contracts

13 June Last day for receipt of tenders for the long-term review contract

13 – 27 June Evaluation of tenders for the long-term review contract

23 June Last day for receipt of tenders for the interim strategic management contract

23 June – 4 July Evaluation of tenders for the interim strategic management contract

1st week in July Award of long-term review contract

2nd week in July Award of interim strategic management contract

From 11 July Mobilisation of interim strategic management provider

31 July Possible termination of Atkins contract

September/October Completion of long-term review

October/November Decision on preferred long-term arrangement

Nov '03 onwards Development of long-term arrangements

By August 2004 Implementation of long-term arrangements

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

14. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

What books are provided in the reference sections of the libraries in Southwark for students taking 'GCSE' examinations and 'A' level examinations?

RESPONSE

Each Southwark library has an extensive collection of GCSE textbooks, guides, etc. covering all the standard subjects. There are two sets in each library, one for reference and one for loan. These are used heavily by children, particularly in relation to the activities of the Homework Help Clubs in eight libraries. They are backed up by a range of standard reference works for children in each library and broader non-fiction works.

The two main reference libraries, at Newington and Dulwich Libraries, have copies of A level textbooks and guides covering all the main subjects. The lending libraries also stock copies of these books as part of their normal stock, with the three largest libraries (Dulwich, Newington and Peckham) having a larger range than smaller libraries. Again, this is backed up by broader non-fiction books and standard reference works, depending on the size of library, including some first degree level support material in the three largest libraries and the two reference libraries.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

15. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

In the light of recent press reports concerning the case of Georgina Rolfe can the Executive Member confirm it is still this Council's stated intention to ensure primary school pupils continue their education together in local secondary schools, and not one of having to be sent from one end of the borough to the other?

RESPONSE

For September 2002 Year 7 admissions stringent efforts were made to comply with parental preference wherever possible and to allocate alternative places at nearby secondary schools. As a result, the vast majority of properly completed applications received on time, were processed according to these principles; a considerable improvement on the position in the recent past.

Clearly, however, when parents decline the place offered at the nearest alternative then a further placement within the locality may be more problematic.

The advent of the new City Academies with the consequential increase in places available has further assisted this process. As a result, the "stated intention" referred to will again be upheld.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

16. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR WILLIAM ROWE

Would the Executive Member provide a detailed analysis of the reliability and running costs of the alternative fuelled vehicles used by the Council?

On reliability the statistics should set out the total number of days that each vehicle has been out of service for the last 3 months.

On running costs the information should provide a comparison with the fuel and maintenance costs of equivalent sized diesel or petrol vehicles.

RESPONSE

The Council is at the forefront of the use of alternative fuel vehicles and is currently in the process of renewing its operational fleet increasing the number of alternative fuel vehicles to over 100, which equates to approximately 35% of the overall Council fleet.

The Council currently has 79 vehicles that run on Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG). During the period 1 January 2003 to the present 30 works orders were raised for non-planned maintenance for the LPG vehicles, this is compared to 113 non-planned maintenance works orders for 56 comparable diesel vehicles during the same period.

Taking an average of each works instruction, the downtime for the LPG vehicles is 45 minutes per vehicle for non planned maintenance for a six month period and 4 hours per vehicle for non planned maintenance for diesel vehicles for the same period.

In terms of costs, the Council currently leases all vehicles, which includes full maintenance, road fund licence, breakdown cover and replacement vehicles. Whilst costs vary on each type of vehicle, LPG leasing costs are typically £50 per month in excess of that for diesel vehicles. However, the new fleet currently being ordered will meet the new category 4-euro standard for vehicle emissions and as such will not have to pay the congestion charge, a saving of up to £25 per week per vehicle.

Fuel usage and ultimately cost per mile again varies from vehicle to vehicle depending on its operation. However, typically LPG is approximately 30% of the cost of diesel per litre and the number of miles obtained per litre for LPG is approximately 70% of that for diesel. In real terms the additional lease costs for LPG vehicles are recovered through fuel savings if the vehicle does approximately 12,000 miles each year.

The Council also has eight electric vehicles purchased during 1998. Regrettably the vehicles concerned have not proved as successful as the LPG vehicles and have experienced significant down time during their operation. All existing fleet vehicles are being replaced during 2003 and it is not intended to purchase any further electric vehicles **of the same model** as not only is the technology unproven but repair and maintenance is difficult to source. **I have asked officers to investigate alternative models and newer technology.**

Obviously the information contained above summaries the position with regard to alternative fuel vehicles, however, should a more detailed analysis be required Phil Davies, Head of Waste Management & Transport would be happy to undertake this work.

17. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

How many cars have been crushed in error by APCOA on behalf of the council since May 2002

RESPONSE

Since May 2002 one claim has been made against APCOA for allegedly crushing a vehicle in error.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

18. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Can the Executive Member outline any proposed programme of works to improve East Street - with special reference to streetscene, road & pavement surfaces, street cleaning and market regulation?

RESPONSE

Regular safety inspections are carried out on all of the Borough's roads to ensure the safety of the public. An additional survey was carried out on 19th June by a Senior Highway Engineer to ascertain the overall structural of East Street's footways and carriageways.

The carriageway, was generally found to be in good condition. This road was resurfaced in hot rolled asphalt approximately six years ago and receives only minimal wear from traffic. The exceptions to this were areas into the headways of several roads that lead off East Street caused by a combination of failing trench reinstatements and general degradation of the road surface.

The footways are constructed in dense bituminous macadam block and while there were large areas that were in relatively good condition there are a large number of smaller localised areas that were in a poor condition looking ugly and untidy. Any areas that represent a potential risk to public safety will be repaired without delay. The block paved areas, although not presenting a Health & Safety risk, have an undulating surface. In other areas failing trench reinstatements around dropped kerbs is causing water to collect in localised locations.

Clearly the footways in particular would benefit from major renewal works. Unfortunately at present we do not have the resources to undertake any such major works on the non-principal road network. We are currently actively seeking to maximise potential sources of external funding to allow such a programme to commence later in the year, but there are a growing number of roads in a much worse condition than East Street. Clearly the conditions in East Street will need to be judged against conditions elsewhere in terms of priority.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

19. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

In light of the recent injury of a child from Charter School what action is being taken to listen to the requests of the school and parents to take urgent action to improve safety?

In particular when will the warning lights on Red Post Hill between the entrance of the school near St Faith's Centre which have been switched off for nearly three years be re-activated, when will a school crossing attendant be introduced and when will warning lights and/or signs be placed near North Dulwich Station.

RESPONSE

The circumstances of this tragic incident are still under investigation by the Metropolitan Police.

In advance of receiving their finding officers have had discussions with local people and Ward Members and a site meeting is to be undertaken within the next 3 weeks with representatives of residents, the school and the Metropolitan Police to consider all the potential road and traffic risks in the road.

All school warning lights have recently been subject to a full survey. This followed by a full maintenance bulb change and repair programme costing 5k.

The subject of a school crossing patrol will be raised at the above meeting and a full survey undertaken which will include health and safety risk assessments.

In association with the Councils bid through the Borough Spending Plan 2004/05 a bid is to be made for a "Safer Routes to Schools Initiative" for the Charter School Area.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

20. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ALUN HAYES

Could the Executive member give Council an update on progress made so far in transferring land adjacent to Queens Road station to Network Rail and could he also tell Council what he has done in the last month to make this happen?

RESPONSE

The current position is that Southwark Legal Services (SLS) are in the process of finalising the Transfer Document with Network Rail's solicitors. SLS are also negotiating a licence which will allow LBS access to the site following the transfer of the land. In the last month there have been exchanges of the Transfer Document by the solicitors and as a result it is now largely agreed.

LBS received Network Rail's standard form of licence and have proposed amendments to protect the Council's position. This was sent to Network Rail's solicitors on 16 June and we are awaiting a response. Once the form of the licence is agreed the parties should be in a position to effect the transfer. The negotiations on the licence have been an unforeseen problem and Network Rail's solicitors appear to be having problems obtaining instructions from their instructing surveyor.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALUN HAYES

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

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

Can the Member confirm that Southwark has increased its financial portfolio holding in BAE Systems (that sells £9b of arms worldwide) from 658,000 shares to just under 5m shares and from 205,800 shares to 890,321 shares in GKN (owners of Westland helicopters), and whether she agrees this is in line with the comments of the Chief Executive that the Council is "...taking a pro-active approach to ethical investment?

RESPONSE

The Pension Fund investments are managed by the following 4 Companies:

Barclays Global Investors (BGI)
Henderson Global Investors (HGI)
Deutsche Asset Management (DeAM)
Putnam Investments

Two of the above, BGI and DeAM, have invested in the companies mentioned in the question, GKN and BAE Systems. The latest holdings are as follows:

BGI

	Holdings in Units	Price (£)	Valuation (£)
BAE Systems	233,954	1.4125	330,460
GKN	56,435	2.2750	128,389

DeAM

	Holdings in Units	Price (£)	Valuation (£)
BAE Systems	0	0	0
GKN	195,061	2.11	411,578

Note: DeAM sold its holding of 156,024 units in BAE with a value of £181,378 on 4th. February 2003.

As can be seen, the holdings are much lower than those stated in the question.

- In the case of BGI, the portfolio is based on a pool of investments contained in the FTSE All Share index. The holdings stay the same and only the value changes as the market moves.
- In the case of DeAM, they actively manage investments and so have decided to invest in these companies. They have informed me that their decisions regarding these investments were based on a belief that the "principal objective for our clients is to produce superior investment performance and the bulk of our resource is directed towards the fulfilment of that objective". In addition to this they also state "there are risks to shareholders from companies which fail to conduct their business

in a socially responsible manner. We would not monitor companies' ethical conduct as a single subject but look to review this where appropriate in the context of financial risk and return. We currently invest in companies linked to the arms trade and do so against the criteria laid out above.

This approach is the same Ethical Investment Policy we inherited from the previous administration. We are currently examining socially responsible behaviour from various standpoints and exploring the various options available to develop this with the aid of investment and legal advisors.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU

Question and response not available owing to a technical failure.

22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR MICHELLE PEARCE

Is the Executive Member satisfied with the Council's Superannuation investment strategy?

RESPONSE

The Council has a duty to manage the Pension Fund assets in such a way as to provide security to employees that the future benefits promised will be funded and delivered at an appropriate cost to the local residents.

The Council's investment strategy is therefore to invest in a mix of assets that is targeted to deliver the promised benefit payments while minimising the current level of employer contributions and the volatility of future contributions. This requires managing and living with risk. If we were to adopt a totally risk averse posture, the costs would make the Plan unaffordable.

In order to implement its strategy the Council takes advice from the actuaries to the Fund, Hewitt Bacon and Woodrow (HBW) and the WM Company who are investment advisors. HBW prepare an asset liability study and the actuarial valuation of the Fund every three years. The strategic asset mix is set at that time and may be slightly amended as necessary following periodic reviews of the fund position. The next asset liability study is due in September 2004 unless there is a significant event which would impact on the Council's ability to achieve its objectives. The WM Company advises on investment performance and fund selection.

Supporting this strategy is the Council's statement of investment principles which meets the requirements of the Myner's report.

23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DOMINIC THORNCROFT

I would like to ask the Executive Member to explain why it has taken more than 12 months for the Council to allocate premises for the East Peckham sure start in Asylum Road and when will the matter be finally resolved?

RESPONSE

It is correct that suitable premises in Asylum Road were identified more than 12 months ago. Since that time work has been underway to resolve issues concerning the lease, building control application notice and the level of rent payable based on change of use and commercial value. Architects plans for refurbishment work and an application for funding for the works have been developed. However the refurbishment work could not be started until the building control application and lease had been signed off, and a number of issues to do with amendments to the lease about liability and other legal matter have been subject to negotiations between Sure Start's solicitors, Southwark Property, Social Services and Southwark Primary Care Trust. Whilst these issues took time to resolve it is expected that approval for the building works will be obtained by 30 June at the latest following which refurbishment work will be undertaken with the aim of Sure Start taking occupation of the building by September 2003.

24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY

Can I ask the Executive member if Southwark Council is planning to respond to the Work & Pensions consultation document on 20th May proposing that Housing benefit payments be withheld from claimants responsible for anti-social behaviour?

RESPONSE

Yes we will be submitting a response by the deadline of 12th August 2003.

25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

Would the Executive Member for Regeneration provide a table showing the average purchase price of homes compulsorily purchased (whether "*by agreement*" or otherwise) for purposes of the Peckham Partnership since its inception, with breakdowns into categories such as year of purchase, size of property, whether owner occupied or let out, and any other category the Executive Member believes relevant and/or helpful?

RESPONSE

It will take some time to collate the figures requested as the information needs to be gathered from the files and I am unable to provide a full response given the time restraint. I will therefore write to Councillor Eckersley with the information in the next week or so, once the officer best placed to locate the information is back from leave.

26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Can the Executive Member give Council Assembly full details relating to the 'door to door' survey she has committed the council to carry out (Southwark news, 05-06-03) on the Heygate Estate?

RESPONSE

This Council's commitment to the widest possible public involvement in the development of the proposals for the Elephant and Castle is set out clearly in the Fresh Start proposals of July last year. Subsequent to those decisions the Council engaged communication specialists and an opinion research company. In addition the project team has taken the proposals at each stage of their development to meetings of tenants, residents, businesses, developers, and a variety of organisations and institutions established around the Elephant and Castle.

Since the autumn of December 2002 a full initial referencing of Heygate tenants has been undertaken. More than 80% of households have returned detailed questionnaires relating their housing requirements, and expressing their preferences for preferred locations for new homes. This was supplemented by material obtained from representative discussion groups providing opinions from a wider catchment about perceptions of the Elephant and Castle, views about housing, transport, open spaces and local facilities, and comments on the emerging proposals prepared by the Elephant and Castle team.

All of this material has informed the preparation of the Elephant and Castle Framework for Development that was launched on the 6th June, marking the commencement of a three-month consultation programme. Over the course of the summer this will be exhibited across the area but will be taken block by block across the Heygate Estate. In due course the Council will approach every household on the Heygate to obtain detailed information on the scheme generally and on their own personal preferences as to new home, preferred location, choice of landlord, and terms of future occupation. The fullest possible levels of participation will be encouraged by continuing the programme of direct mailings, use of newsletters, working arrangements with the Heygate project team and the availability of officers to provide tenants and leaseholders with the opportunities for one to one discussions.

I would suggest that this genuine and comprehensive approach to public participation contrasts favourably with the narrow reliance on unrepresentative organisations that characterised the previous administrations working arrangements.

27. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR NORMA GIBBES

What was the nature of the consultation that took place about the Grove Vale Environment Improvement Programme, and who was involved in the process”

RESPONSE

I understand from officers that, under the previous administration, agreement was reached by councillors in 1998 to go ahead with an enhancement scheme for Grove Vale, to be funded through a £60,000 Environment Improvement Programme budget. At the same time, the Grove Vale Residents Forum lobbied the Council to allocate additional funds from the sale of the Grove Vale Depot to increase the pot of money available to spend on improvements.

On 1st October 1998, the Grove Vale Forum circulated their own consultation questionnaire and received 200 responses from a range of local traders, residents and community groups.

A tendering process was undertaken to chose a contractor and the council considered a range of companies from it's own list as well as suggestions put forward by local people.

An internal panel shortlisted three designs and consultation began in November 1999. The procedures for consultation were the same as those used for all environmental improvement projects and included:

- ❑ Consultation with the emergency services and relevant council departments
- ❑ Posters displayed in the immediate area
- ❑ Visits to every shop in the area by the project officer, who handed leaflets to staff and customers, identifying himself as a council officer and explaining what the leaflet was about
- ❑ Meetings between representatives of the Grove Vale Forum, local ward councillors and council officers
- ❑ An advertisement in the South London Press and a 1st class posted invitation to more than 2,000 people, inviting them to a public exhibition at Goose Green on 27th November. 500 questionnaires were given out and 158 were completed.

Following analysis of this consultation, a contractor was selected. Representatives of the Grove Vale Forum were invited with other partners to a project board meeting where the detail of the project and the process for prioritisation was discussed.

In February 2000 a further questionnaire was sent to all local retailers by Anthony Bowhill and Associates, who were commissioned to carry out a more detailed consultation exercise with retailers to look at the economic and social impact of the proposed improvements. Fifteen questionnaires were returned.

In June 2000 another consultation took place, following exactly the same process as the 1999 consultation. The scope of the consultation was extended to include:

- joint consultation with Railtrack on a new lighting scheme under the railway bridge.
- consultation with the head teachers and governors of the school about safety issues in and around the school.

Where it was not possible to carry out all of the work, local ward members were asked to prioritise that which they felt should be done first. Those people who made it known that they were unable to attend the exhibition to view the full size plans were sent miniaturised plans to ensure that as many people as possible had a chance to have their say. There are no major objections on record other than minor objections regarding specific elements of some of the proposals.

On 26th February, Hyder Consulting wrote to all retailers notifying them of the impending works and enclosing drawings. Confirmation of receipt by the retailers is on record.

28. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNICATION & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR SARAH WELFARE

When will the Council be publicising the last municipal year's total sum of allowances paid to each member in respect of basic, special responsibility and childcare and dependent carers allowances, as it is required to do under the 2001 regulations governing the publicity of members allowances?"

RESPONSE

Let me begin by saying that, technically, this area falls within the portfolio of my Colleague, the Executive Member for Resources - however I'm happy to answer as this question relates to council publicity.

The information will be published as soon as possible. Officers have been instructed to send the individual figures to Members so that Members can check their accuracy before publication. I will ensure that the figures are published as soon as Members have had a reasonable chance to check their accuracy.

29. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BRADBURY

What are the number of appeals against decisions of the Planning Committee

- a) upheld
- b) refused in the municipal year 2002/03?

RESPONSE

Between 1 May 2002 and 12 June 2003, 16 appeals were lodged against decisions of the Planning Committee to refuse planning permission. 11 of these appeals have been determined, 2 have been withdrawn and 3 remain outstanding.

Of the 11 appeals determined, 8 have been allowed and 2 dismissed. 1 was part allowed/part dismissed. This represents a success rate for the Council of 23%.

30. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

What are the number of appeals against decisions of the Licensing Committee

- a) upheld
- b) refused in the municipal year 2002/03?

RESPONSE

Overall, since 1 April 2002, 8 appeals have been heard or lodged against decisions of the Council's Licensing Committee.

The position is that:-

- The Council's decision has been fully upheld in 2 cases (on one of these occasions the appellant failed to attend Court)
- The Council's decision has been partly upheld in 2 further cases
- The Council's decision has been overturned in 1 case
- One further appeal was withdrawn prior to the Court hearing date
- Two further cases await hearing in the Court

31. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY

Does the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree with the comments of Cllr. Jenny Kingsley (Con, Kensington & Chelsea) that "One questions how constructive scrutiny can be if what is being scrutinised is party policy, and 'whipping' pressurises members not to risk awkward questions and make recommendations...Party policy is meant to be debated, not dictated..(and) vice-chairs and chairs should be from opposing parties...", and with those of Cllr. Ross Laird (LibDem, Haringey) that

"...where scrutiny usually fails it is because it is run by the ruling group...", and what parallels and lessons does he draw for the operation of scrutiny procedures in Southwark?"

RESPONSE

I am always interested in hearing about colleagues' experience of governance arrangements in other boroughs and of course it will reflect their own boroughs' issues. I agree with the principles of both the members quoted, but I see little parallel with Southwark. In our case, chairs and vice chairs are from opposing parties, and there is no whipping in scrutiny. Most committees operate on a consensual basis on the majority of their reviews.

In my view some of the most successful scrutiny inquiries have been those where the committees seek to develop and influence policy, for example the work on access to GPs, community councils, secondary schools in East Dulwich and on monitoring the council's implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act. O&SC and the sub-committees are currently planning their work programmes for the coming year and the onus is on members from all sides to put forward proposals for scrutiny reviews.