

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 29th OCTOBER 2003

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 3.8 : MEMBERS QUESTION TIME

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR SARAH WELFARE

Would Councillor Stanton agree that it is not best practice for officers of the Council to co-sign letters to the press with members of the Executive rebutting points made by members of the public?

RESPONSE

It is not usual for Executive Members and officers to co-sign letters, and it will not normally be necessary or appropriate given that officers and executive members have distinct roles and responsibilities.

However, in some circumstances it can be appropriate, and may be desirable for a letter to be sent jointly. For example it is not uncommon for the Chief Executive and me to jointly sign letters.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SARAH WELFARE

Does the Leader think it appropriate then that the Executive Member for Regeneration cosign a letter with Chris Horn a Senior Officer in the Regeneration Department in Southwark News on October 2nd because I would argue that getting Officers into direct political debates with the public through the media undermines the proper role for Council Officers and Members and it should be the politically accountable Executive Member who should respond to their electorate and does he agree?

RESPONSE

No Mr Mayor, I think in the particular circumstances of this letter it was appropriate for Councillor Bowman and Chris Horn to co-sign the letter. It was important that both the Director of the projects and the Executive Member who has political responsibility put their names to a letter which corrected the misleading and inaccurate information about the Council's plans for the Heygate Estate and the effects on tenants which have been published in previous editions.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK PURSEY

The Treasury revenue forecast implies a 6% council tax increase next year, whilst local government ministers insist that only an inflationary increase in council tax is required. Could the Leader comment on this discrepancy?

RESPONSE

It is interesting that the government expects councils to deliver on a broad range of central government initiatives; doesn't provide all the money needed, even dictating the precise amount of cash in the case of education and then criticises councils because they have asked taxpayers to make up the shortfall.

This Council has sought to minimise the burden to its taxpayers. Last year Southwark achieved the lowest council tax rise in London at 4.3%.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILOR MARK PURSEY

I sure the Leader would have recently seen an article in the Financial Times and also articles in similar broadsheet papers about the potential for a £36 billion pounds shortfall in public finances caused by our wonderful Chancellor, Mr Brown. Would the Leader agree with me that it is unlikely that there will be an increased settlement for Local Government and would he write to the Government on behalf of the Council to propose that we support the Government in proposing a local Income Tax when they come to make their decision on the way forward for Local Government finances. At the moment they are currently looking at the options and this of course is one of them.

RESPONSE

Yes Mr Mayor I think it is the next question for the Council to support a campaign for fair local Income Tax which accurately reflect people's ability to pay instead of the regressive and unfair Tory Council Tax which bizarrely this Labour Government is insisting on perpetuating people with a 70% rise in Council Tax levels over the last 6 years. It is quite clear that this Government has got itself into a massive hole in Local Government finance – it was quite clear last year that DFES did not know what it was doing on school budgets and judging by the front page – well I am sorry that Labour Members don't think that there was a problem last year with school budgets because most schools do and I would be interested in the view of the local councillors who think actually that everything is hunky dory and it is clear from Local Government First which was published this week that the ODPM is only slowly waking up to the realisation that by the time they ringfence the Education settlement; by the time they have insisted that the Council have only put up Council Tax in line with the rate of inflation; that there is precious little money left over for the Council to do any of the things we are constantly being urged to do by Ministers on the whole Crime and Grime agenda.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

In the light of the colourful and politicised language of the Executive's resolution of 7th October 2003 on "*Policy and Resourcing Strategy 2004/07*", in particular its support for "*Liberal Democrat campaign*" for a local income tax "*which would take account of a person's ability to pay*", would the Leader of the Council provide full details of the Liberal Democrat proposals (including, for example, confirmation that, in an household where two or more persons with "ability to pay" benefit from services provided through a local income tax, each one of such persons will pay) and, if he is unable to provide details of what his party is campaigning for, would he agree that much of the 7th October resolution should properly be seen as a mask for the Executive's failure to give an adequate steer to officers for responsible budget-making 2004/05, as requested in paragraph 14 of the officers report?

RESPONSE

To be tabled separately

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

Given that the last paragraph of the Leader's answer fails to answer the key question on the Liberal Democrat policy which is whether in multi-person households where each person pays income tax will each person pay local income tax. May I assist him by quoting from the Lib Dem's briefing sheet dated September 2003, and I quote: Will people sharing houses have to pay separately, answer: yes. But they will only pay local income tax on their taxable income.

RESPONSE

Mr Mayor, loyalty is a quality in conspicuously short supply in the Conservative Party in recent years and you have to take your hat off to Councillor Eckersley for sticking by Council Tax an unfair regressive tax unrelated to the ability to pay in the teeth of all the evidence that it is simply isn't working. I am quite happy with the answer I have given which is yes if more than one person in a house is earning and is eligible to pay income tax then they would have to pay local income tax. My answer I am afraid is not as complete as I would have like. We had a run-in with the Officers. What I wanted to add at the end and I am quite happy to say it in my oral supplementary is that the Liberal Democrats will be publishing in detail following the announcement of this year's Local Government settlement in February a guide to how local income tax would work in detail and it is interesting that the Labour run ALG acceded to my call to call for the Government to consider a local income tax in their current review of the Local Government finance system. It is clear from steers that has been given by Ministers that they are seriously considering income tax its clear that as when we were involved in the argument about the Poll Tax, Labour really do not have a clue about what to do about Local Government finance they are very good at knowing what they are against but they are very bad at working out what it is that they are for and this is yet another Liberal Democrat policy like independence for the Bank of England; like devolution for Scotland and Wales which I am sure is due to materialise - you have heard it here first and

Mr Mayor I have to say this because it's a line that I constantly use at the ALG Leaders Committee and not a single Tory Councillor has come back to me on it. If we as democratically elected politicians do not stick up for the basic principle that taxation ought to be related to the ability to pay – if we democratically politicians do not stick up for that principle who on earth else is and what on earth is the point of being in politics if you are not in favour of fairness of taxation and how can anyone support a Local Government finance system in which it is so unfair that the poorest 20% in our Society pay six times more of their income in Council Tax than the richest 20%. I am not surprised that under Mrs Thatcher and Mr Major that the Conservative introduced that kind of taxation but I am flummoxed that under the new caring sharing Duncan Smith or David Davis or Michael Howard or whoever it is today leadership they are sticking by and I am astonished that the Labour Group are all over the place and don't know where they stand on this issue because for us it is very simple.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ALUN HAYES

Could the Leader outline what the total cost of the current consultation process for the East Peckham and Nunhead priority areas will be? And does he share the concern of local people and myself that unless the Executive gives a commitment to carry out work following that process Southwark Council risks raising expectations, disappointing and ultimately alienating local people from future local decision-making?

RESPONSE

The funding for the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (NRA) for East Peckham and Nunhead is £75,000. This money was made available from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which the Government have expressly made available for projects which fall outside mainstream Council activities.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment process predates the establishment of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund by some years and the process is governed by detailed Government guidance. Any authority considering the declaration of a renewal area must consider the guidance and the procedures it lays out. The process involves a close examination of the housing stock within the two priority neighbourhoods as well as consultation with residents on the identification of problems and potential environmental improvements. The NRA cannot be undertaken without substantial consultation. Officers will stress throughout this process that funds will need to be identified to address problems highlighted by this consultation.

Officers have been asked to produce a report that will set out a series of options regarding the way forward. These options will be fully costed and this will enable decisions to be made about future capital expenditure based on detailed factual information which addresses real needs as identified by residents. The report will also highlight all the activities by other sections of the Council where funding has already been identified.

It is however impossible to give a commitment to carrying out works at this stage because no works have been formally identified. The works required will only be identified as the NRA process progresses and the consideration of likely costs will be an essential element of the strategy adopted.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALUN HAYES

My question is since he is so big on consultation and his group is big on consultation and since there is such a big consultation process going on in a large part of our Ward, Nunhead and East Peckham, why hasn't the Council consulted with the East Peckham Consortium which is the biggest community organisation in East Peckham with regards to this issue and can he give me an assurance that that is going to happen over the next few weeks.

RESPONSE

I have no idea why it hasn't happened, but I will urgently investigate and I will now commit us to doing so and I am grateful to Councillor Hayes for drawing that to my attention.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR TONY RITCHIE

Why is Southwark one of the few London Boroughs not to provide data to the panel reviewing members allowances?

RESPONSE

In fact officers did respond to the request from the Association of London Government (ALG) Panel for information to assist the Panel in coming to a view on Member Allowance levels, although the response was sent in slightly after the deadline. However, officers at the ALG did confirm at the time that the information from Southwark had been received and was definitely before Panel members when they met to consider their recommendations. The ALG report was produced very quickly after that meeting, and it is likely that this is the reason the information did not make it into the table in the final published report.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR TONY RITCHIE

This is the second occasion that during the period of his leadership we have asked this sort of question that the Council has not been able to get replies back to the ALG in time to be published in the information that has gone round the borough. Will he please ensure in future that not only a reply sent but that they are submitted in time for publication in ALG documents and I am sure he would agree with me that it does not look good when there is blanks against Southwark's name or Southwark is not included in that consultation process.

RESPONSE

I quite agree with Councillor Ritchie and I am sure Officers would do their utmost to respond in time in the future.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD

Can the Leader confirm whether the Council is going to make any formal input into the consultation on possible Foundation hospital status which is being conducted by both Guys & St Thomas hospital Trust and Kings hospital? The consultation ends on 12th November.

RESPONSE

The Executive will consider a paper on these proposals at its meeting on the 25th November. I am pleased to note that Guy's & St Thomas NHS Trust have agreed to extend the deadline for responses to their proposals in order to allow the Council sufficient time to fully consider the proposed governance arrangements.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD

Why then did he fail to respond or even acknowledge the letter that was sent to him by the Chair of the Guys Hospital Board inviting the Council to participate fully in this consultation process and when was this letter received by him?

RESPONSE

I honestly can't remember when I received the letter – it didn't seem to me to be a letter that particularly called for acknowledgement or a reply until we had our consultation to hand. I do meet Mrs Moberley quite often and I did speak to her about this last week at the launch of the London South Central Region do in Waterloo, but I have to say Mr Mayor I am quite happy to consult now with the Southwark Labour Group where they stand on Foundation Trusts because I am very interested to find out whether they agree with their party conference that they are thundering bad ideas which should be stopped or whether they agree with their government that they are a thunderingly good idea which should be whipped through Parliament as quickly as possible and I am also interested in hearing their views about whether it is undemocratic to force Trusts to consult on Foundation status bids at a time when the legislation enabling Foundation Trusts still hasn't got through Parliament or whether they agree with us that this is an abuse of democracy and trampling rights over the rights of Parliament for them to be made to consult ahead of the legislation actually being passed because if this Council was consulting on the implications of a policy change before the policy had been changed the Labour Group would be hopping up and down with outrage.

7. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCILLOR CHARLIE SMITH

Along with myself and Councillor Sarah Welfare you'll recall the visit you made with Councillor Richard Porter to the East Dulwich Community Centre during the summer. During the visit you met with members of the Centre's Management Committee who then showed you both around the centre and the main topic discussed at the meeting was to secure a lease on the premises in order to safeguard its long term use as a Community Centre. As

you know the Management Committee would like to build a new Community Centre on the site that would benefit all sections of the local community.

Therefore, can you tell me what progress you have made on the matter?

RESPONSE

Following our meeting in the summer with yourself, Cllr Richard Porter and members of the Community Centre's Management Committee (I do not recall Cllr Welfare being present) to look at the Community Centre and discuss some of the ideas and plans the Committee has for the site, I have been in discussion with officers to try to find a suitable way forward.

It was clear from our visit that the facilities are currently of a poor standard and the site clearly does not realise its full potential for the community and is under-utilised. In addition there is a real drive from the Community Centre's Management Committee to secure the future of the Community Centre and to develop a broader number of services and activities run at the Centre.

The Council recognises the benefit of retaining community facilities in this part of East Dulwich and I can reassure you that the Council is committed to trying to realise this aim by looking into the possibilities of constructing a brand new Centre. A development of the site (subject to planning permission) would enable improved community facilities to be provided. As part of this, officers are looking at the possible development of an affordable housing scheme which could help fund this new Community Centre, which would benefit all residents in Southwark.

The granting of a new lease to the Management Committee at this stage would therefore not be advantageous to the Council in trying to realise these aims. I hope that some proposals will be available for discussion on this matter over the coming months and as a Ward Councillor will ensure you are kept informed.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM CHARLIE SMITH

Can I just clarify and apologise; Councillor Sarah Welfare was not at that meeting. We had a meeting a few days closer with Councillor Humphreys and she was at that. It seems that there is a done deal here as far as the community centre is concerned. The Community Centre Management Committee have asked if a lease could be granted because that is the only way that they could raise funds for the building of a new community centre. As you know it could not go to any of the voluntary organisations or the financial institutions without some kind of permanence. Now it seems to me the Officers and I have some e-mails here on the discussions on the Community Centre and it seems that Jeremy Pilgrim has already said that because of the inherent value of residential development I suspect that the Management Committee would not be in a position to raise sufficient funds – well as I say they need that lease to be able to do that and if we believe as a council that we should devolve power to local communities I think it is important that the local people in East Dulwich and that community centre has the opportunity to do that and I would ask and my question is could you have a rethink on this, talk to Officers about the possibility of the actual Management Committee on the community centre looking to build a new community centre on its own.

RESPONSE

Thank you very much for your supplementary and I did wonder whether my memory was serving me and I am glad you have corrected the issue of Councillor Welfare not being present at the meeting. There is no done deal and those words you have used are very much wrong – all that has happened since we have met is that I have spoken to Officers about this site and I think they have looked at it and I think it is quite clear we want the real vision from local people that actually the site really doesn't serve the purpose there we really need a modern centre there and I have had a chat with some officers and they are look at coming back with some ideas which will focus our minds to start talking around the issue and I think with just the site there it is often very difficult to think what else could be there I think it is a good idea to have a few visuals so that we can then chat round and obviously work with the Management Committee to look at a suitable way forward but I think if we could come to a way forward where we get a brand new state of the art community centre in that part of East Dulwich then local residents would welcome that and we will work towards that. The issue of the lease being granted as I put at the end I think is not in the Council's interest at the moment to do that because we want to look at some options sit down and talk about it and we may find that actually we come to a better way forward that way and the Council has to protect its legal interest. Its not under threat the community centre they can carry on using it management committee and others at the moment and what we are going to do is come up with a number of options meet with you meet with you meet with the ward councillors and the management committee to try to come up with a suitable way forward that I hope everyone can support because I think this could be a very exciting project where we could get a brand new community centre in this part of East Dulwich. I know it is wanted I know there are lots of services that could be provided from that so we have a community centre that perhaps work from 8 in the morning till 9-10 at night 7 days a week and I think that would be fantastic for that area and I am committed to work with you to try to come up with a suitable way forward

8. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN FLANNERY

Can the Deputy Leader comment on feedback she has received in relation to Community Councils and give attendance figures for both Community Councils and area fora?

RESPONSE

Feedback from those attending Community Councils has been both favourable and constructive. A full analysis of questionnaires completed by those attending meetings will be made available to Scrutiny as part of the review but can be summarised briefly:

- 74% of residents feel they are listened to. Being able to meet Officers and Councillors is thought very valuable.
- 68% were satisfied with feedback from previous meetings
- 68% were satisfied with the quality of presentations
- 70% were satisfied with information provided
- 65% felt that decisions were informed by the debates

There is clearly room for improvement but the general level of satisfaction is encouraging at this early stage in Community Council development.

Attendance

The following figures are from recorded attendance sheets at both Area Forum and Community Council meetings. It should be noted that signing in is not compulsory at Community Council meetings.

During the period March 2001 and January 2002 there were four Area Forum meetings. During the period April 2003 and September 2003 there were four meetings of Community Councils. These are the periods for the figures below – this and the fact that there are 8 Community Councils but were only 6 Area Fora means no direct ‘area’ comparisons can be made.

	Area Forum	Community Council
Total attendees	998	1535
Average over all meetings	250	384

Overall 54% more people have attended Community Councils in six months than the previous Area Forum arrangement over 11 months.

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

Could the Executive Member for Resources please provide the average and maximum times for passing claimants' housing benefit appeals to the new independent tribunal for

- i. 2002/03
- ii. The current financial year to date.

RESPONSE

The average for 2002/03 was 9 weeks from the date the request for the appeal was received by the authority.

The average for the current financial year is 5 weeks.

The maximum time for passing appeals to the tribunal for both years is 24 weeks and still counting. This is a case which is also the subject of an appeal to the Department of Work and Pensions, and if that appeal is successful, then Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit would be payable, and no appeal would be needed.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR MICHELLE PEARCE

I understand that the Local Government Ombudsman is still rather concerned about every five weeks. When you think about it passing an appeal on really should not take that much time and I understand that the recommendation is that the appeal should be passed on within 28 days. Would she commit herself to laying down a new standard of 28 days target and publishing performance data on it so that we will know how well they are doing in future.

RESPONSE

I would be pleased to set a new standard and ensure that appeals are passed on within 28 days. I think 5 weeks is a long time. We have been working with the contractors to improve the processing of housing benefits in general and they are doing pretty well. I don't see any reason why they should not be able to take on this challenge of getting appeal processed within 28 days.

10. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BRADBURY

In the light of the fact that all London Council workers have received pay rises of between 7.7 and 11% in the last year (ALG Key Issues Bulletin 26/09/03), would the Executive Member for Finance confirm that, with a view to providing some relief for taxpayers, all payroll savings resulting from “industrial action” will be taken straight to balances, and not used as windfall departmental savings?

RESPONSE

I am happy to say that I will be asking Chief Officers to disclose these amounts to the Chief Finance Officer. While these amounts can be put into balances, I am sure the Member realises that these savings can only be used once.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BRADBURY

I would like to thank the Executive for her answer and would reassure her that I do indeed appreciate that while Government Ministers may announce the same money time and time again it can only just be spent just the once. However could I press her to be a little bit more specific in her answer. She says that the amount saved can be put into balances. Can I ask her for an assurance that they will be put into balances?

RESPONSE

Yes.

11. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Has any decision been taken as to the future of the Aylesbury Day Centre?

RESPONSE

No decision has been made by the Council with respect to the future configuration of day services for people with physical disabilities. A strategy for this will be considered by the Executive in January. This will include proposals on the future use of the Aylesbury Day Centre. However in line with the decision of the Executive on 22nd April 2003, individual community care assessments have been taking place for all those who use day services, including the Aylesbury Day Centre, in order to ensure they meet the Council's eligibility criteria.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Can the Executive Member give me any assurances that the Aylesbury Day Centre will stay in the location its in?

RESPONSE

Thank you for your supplementary – I have to say the Aylesbury Day Centre has been a bit of a baptism of fire for myself as the new Executive Member for Health & Social Care. There is a big review of day care services going on at the moment as you know and that includes all the day care services for older people and the Aylesbury for adults with disabilities. I can guarantee there will be as far as I am aware a service for disabled people with very complex needs but I can't at this moment in time say the exact location where that will be because the Aylesbury Day Centre is being reviewed at a service and is also part I believe of a neighbourhood renewal of the Aylesbury Estate as well, so there are two issues going on completely independent of each other. One I know a bit more about now obviously and one I know not a lot about so right at this moment in time I cannot say exactly what the location of the Aylesbury Day Centre may well be.

12. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE

Will the Executive Member please inform me how many nursing and residential homes and how many voluntary groups supported by social services she has visited?

RESPONSE

Councillor Dixon-Fyle did not specify over what period she was referring to and as I have been in post for only two weeks, I have answered her question referring to the previous one year period as Mayor and Deputy Mayor. During this time I have attempted to visit a cross section of services delivered across our borough.

These services include: Evelyn Coyle EMI Day Centre, Aylesbury Day Centre, Southwark Park Day Centre, Stones End (Age Concern) Day Centre, Yalding (Age Concern) Day Centre, St Faith's Community Centre, Queens Road (Learning Disability) Day Centre, Southwark Park Nursing Home, Greenhive (Anchor) Residential Home, Tower Bridge Nursing Home, Camberwell Green Nursing Home, Holmhurst (EMI) Day Centre, Southwark Irish Pensioners, Lorimore Centre, Southwark Carers Forum, Southwark Pensioners Centre, Beormund Centre, Abbey Street Children's Home.

13. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR DOMINIC THORNCROFT

A number of estates in the Nunhead area are terrorised by anti-social neighbours. Can the Executive Member for Housing give a figure for the number of tenants evicted since May 2002 on the basis of evidence gathered by the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit which may not have resulted in an Anti Social Behaviour Order through the courts but which clearly demonstrates anti-social behaviour on the part of the tenants in contravention of the tenancy agreement?

RESPONSE

Action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour is escalated to legal action where low level interventions e.g. mediation or Acceptable Behaviour Contracts have not been effective or immediate respite for the community is required e.g. because violence has been used or threatened.

Since May last year over seventy tenants have been the subject of legal proceedings for Notices of Seeking Possession, Possession Orders and injunctions. Of thirty-five tenants who received Notices, twenty-one have been the subject of possession proceedings with four tenants evicted.

A further six tenants had evidence of anti-social behaviour joined to rent arrears action and were evicted. Thirteen crack houses have also been closed down.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DOMINIC THORNCROFT

Can I thank the Executive Member for Housing for answer and ask that she circulate a breakdown by ward for the figures that are indicated in her answer. Can I ask that she circulate that to all Members of the Council. Can I further ask whether she agrees with me that given the scale of the problem with anti-social tenants that 4 evictions in 18 months represents a pretty poor level of activity on the part of the Housing Department and what are you going to do to try and improve this lamentable figure?

RESPONSE

Thank you Councillor Thorncroft, I am grateful for you raising this issue - very Important issue - this is something I that I feel very strongly about. I thought your supplemental started off well but went down towards the end. It says here quite clearly that 70 tenants have been the subject of legal proceedings. Those proceedings are not complete in all of those cases and therefore there may be more evictions. There are actually 6 tenants that have been evicted on evidence of anti-social behaviour that's joined to rent arrears as well as all the work that we have done on crack houses. I am very happy to get a breakdown as much as I can of the cases that there are legal proceedings pending and if that's possible to be done by Wards I will of course circulate to you and to Members of the Chamber.

14. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD

Could the Executive Member give assurances that the very serious effects of low water pressure for blocks on top of the lifts of East Dulwich Estate and Denmark Hill will be alleviated as speedily as possible?

RESPONSE

Residents living in a number of blocks at the tops of Denmark Hill and East Dulwich Estates have experienced falling water pressure for some years. These problems have become more acute in the last 12-18 months as Thames Water have failed to repair or renew their infrastructure for the supply of water and have reduced the pressure at which water supplies are pumped to reduce leakages, although statutory minimum pressure has been maintained.

Recent discussions with OFWAT the water regulator, have not proved to be directly beneficial to the affected neighbourhoods. However, OFWAT have issued a press release in the last fortnight advising that Thames Water were not able to meet their targets for existing repairs and as a result OFWAT have agreed that Thames Water will be able to increase their charges in the expectation of meeting increased targets over the next 5 years.

Officers are in contact Thames Water and OFWAT about the problems, which this low pressure causes residents. Further discussions are to take place with them to ensure that they meet their obligations to our residents.

However, given that no short term solution is seen to this problem affecting our residents, consideration is being given to what technical solutions may be available to the Council, including the possible installation of pumps on the water supply. Officers are working with technical consultants to progress this as a matter of urgency.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD

I thank you very much for your answer to this question. Its good that it does indicate some work is in progress on this but I cannot emphasise strongly enough how serious this situation is for residents on these two estates. Someone has emailed me almost every morning for the last 3 weeks saying that he has not had a shower again – that's one rather over simple demonstration of what's happening. It really is serious for people. How much assurance can you really give given that this is like this process which I know because I have talked to people about how complex it will be estimating the cost of pumps and all the rest of it. Can you really give me any sense of how speedy this process can in fact be and what happens about these people in taking measures in the meantime to ensure that they have water which is so basic.

RESPONSE

Thank you very much Councillor Ward for your question and for your supplementary. I entirely share your frustration that tenants in your ward are

without water. Basically tenants without any of the amenities suffer unnecessarily sometimes its matters out of their control. On this particular occasion we are being hindered by Thames Water – I want to be careful about what I say because I don't want to be libelled, but I am told by Officers that they are persistently failing to carry out routine maintenance work to water pipes and its because of the drop of pressure that they are now providing that we are not able to get water right up to the top of these blocks – that's clearly not acceptable and I am not going to stand here trying to make excuses for Thames Water. We have in the department called on other utility companies in an attempt to try and make them take seriously the concerns we have. Personally I think part of the problem we have is that some of the utility companies have a monopoly on the service that they are able to provide to their customer and take our custom far too flippantly – I know that Officers in Southwark Technical Services have been working flat out to try and find a resolution and one of those is the purchasing and implementation of water pumps which is going to be costly and in purchasing those that means something else does not happen. All I can do at this stage is to tell you that I will keep on this matter and that I will try and provide as much information to you and to your ward colleagues as I can.

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

Could the Executive Member please give the number of Assistant Contracts Officers for each Neighbourhood Housing Office at the following dates?

- (a) 1st June 2002
- (b) 1st June 2003
- (c) 1st October 2003

RESPONSE

I have summarised the information requested from the Southwark Housing records as follows:

Office	(a) 1st June 2002	(b)1st June 2003	(c) 1st October 2003
Library Street	4	3	3
A.Salter	3	4	3
Cherry Gdn	3	3	3
Abbeyfield	4	4	4
Rodney	4	4	4
Lynton	3	3	3
West Walw.	4	4	4
Taplow	3	4	4
West Camb	3	3	3
Harris St	4	6	5
Acorn	7	6	5
Rosemary	2	2	2
Pelican	2	2	2
Parkside	3	5	3
Denmark Hill	2	2	2
Crown Hse	6	6	7
Totals	57	61	57

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY

I would like to thank the Executive Member for her answer in which I particularly note the cuts at Parkside Neighbouring Office. I understand that the increases at Parkside between June 2002 and June 2003 were aim to address problems with ground maintenance and we recently heard at the Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council that there is still considerable problems with ground maintenance in Parkside. Could the Executive Member please explain why the total number of ACOs has been cut in the last few months from 61 to 57 and in particular why the cuts at Parkside are particularly deep.

RESPONSE

Thank you very much Councillor Colley for your question and for your supplementary. As you can see by the figures, the figures in October of this year are no different to what they were in June 2002. There was an increase of 4. The particular problems that you raised in relation to Parkside Neighbourhood I am told that additional temporary staff were employed specifically to monitor environmental and other contracts for a period overlapping last year and this financial year, but the establishment for Parkside is 3. I am not aware that any other neighbourhoods are down significantly. If you know differently then please talk to me, but as far as I can see the position now is no different to that that it was in June of last year.

16. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR BILLY KAYADA

In deciding the future of housing forums, what factors are under consideration and how much weight will be given to the views of tenants and residents. A the Peckham consultative meeting on the future of housing forums held on 24 September tenant representatives from Rosemary Gardens and Acorn Neighbourhood Housing Forums argued and voted unanimously for the retention/continuation of their individual forums. Will their views be acted upon and those of others who wish to retain their forums?

RESPONSE

Following consideration by the Executive of the report on the Best Value Review of Housing Management on the 29th July 2003, further consultation on the number of Housing Forums has been carried out via eight area meetings. The recommendations of all these meetings will shortly be considered by Tenant and Leaseholder Councils. Subsequently their recommendations will be considered by the Executive as part of a comprehensive report on this matter.

Obviously, the Executive is keen to hear the views of tenants and leaseholders and that is why we ensured that further consultation was carried out. In reaching a final decision we will have regard to the views of Tenant & Leaseholder Councils and of course such factors as the number of Council properties and number of Tenant and Resident Associations and Tenant Management organisations in each of the eight Housing Management areas.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BILLY KAYADA

I would like to thank the Member for her response. Does she feel that the further consultation she referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of her response was sufficient and also what weight will be given to the result of this exercise in a final decision on a future of the forums?

RESPONSE

Thank you very much Councillor Kayada for your supplementary. Yes I do think there has been plenty of opportunity for consultation on this specific elements of the Best Value Review of Housing Management. I could have given you realms and realms of papers for all the consultations that's taken place but I don't think that's necessary what you was asking for. Reports have gone to all the neighbourhood forums and their views have been collated and as it says in my answer a report will be going to Tenants Council and Leaseholder Council it will be foolish of us to completely ignore their views and the Executive will consider them when they come through.

17. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

Can the Executive Member confirm what steps have been taken so far to ensure a better deal for leaseholders?

RESPONSE

Over the last 18 months there have been a range of important policies that have been agreed by the Executive following close working between officers and the Leaseholder Council. These have included

- introduction of a sliding scale of administrative charges
- introduction of a range of payment options for payment of major works charges (Section 20 bills)
- changes to billing design and methods

Training courses have also been established for Leaseholder representatives and Members to aid them in helping leaseholders with their leasehold issues.

At the next Leaseholder Council there will be an item seeking to regularise and separately identify all the various elements of service charges, which should aid understanding of bills, identification of costs and assist income collection. A report is also in preparation regarding the possible introduction of a buy-back policy.

In addition a Leasehold Improvement Plan has been jointly agreed between officers and the Leaseholder Council and will be jointly updated in the next 3 months to contain the new requirements of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

More fundamentally, in recognition that the percentage of leaseholders occupying Council properties may rise to 25% within the next two years, the Best Value Review of Housing Management singled out the need to review and expand the Leasehold Management Unit. The Executive agreed the

“Vision” of that review, and as Executive Member I am pleased to report that the Strategic Director of Housing recruited one of the most experienced and expert practitioners in leasehold management to head up the new team in May 2003.

The priority now is to establish a unit that reflects the “best practice” structures of the authorities that are recognised as best performing in leasehold management and recruitment has already begun to the new structure which has already seen significant improvements in processing right to buy applications and resolving outstanding leaseholder enquiries.

18. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN HUNT

Can the Executive Member reassure residents on the Tustin Estate, particularly in Ambleside Point and the other two tower blocks, that interruptions to electricity and water supplies will be dealt with; that lifts will be repaired to a satisfactory standard and a full-time concierge restored?

RESPONSE

The periodic interruptions to the electrical supply at Ambleside Point, which affects the pumps to the water tanks and the lifts, have been dealt with quickly and always within twenty-four hours.

Despite investigations the underlying cause of the problem has been difficult to identify but the Council’s specialist technical services team and London Electricity have now determined what the problem is and are jointly working to ensure a permanent solution.

The concierge service at Tustin Estate is fully staffed to its complement of three staff. Cover arrangements have been problematic recently because private security contractors have not proved to be effective. The Neighbourhood Office is reviewing the way short-term cover is provided to ensure a seamless provision.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN HUNT

I would like to thank the Executive Member for her reply. However I do believe I must tell her that I gather that the lifts and water at Ambleside Point have been out for another two days and I was woken early this morning by tenants telling me that it had failed yet again after supplies had been restored. I think we are well aware that the cause is not pirates of the airwaves, asteroids or little green men from Mars as we may believe by reading some newspaper stories. I am pleased to see that the Council and the Contractors are working to find a permanent solution and could the Executive Member assure me and the residents and leaseholders that we will have a report on the cause of these problems and find whatever the cause and what steps are being taken to find a more permanent solution and when can we expect the end of these periodic interruptions which cause a great deal of suffering.

RESPONSE

As I said previously this evening we are at the beck and call of utility companies and until such time that they are able to carry out all the work that's necessary on their equipment it does make it rather difficult. If I was clever enough to be able to know or to predict then there would never be another utility failure then I would probably be a much richer woman. What I would say to you I am well aware of what happened at Ambleside yesterday. I was in contact throughout yesterday with the Neighbourhood Manager and the Contracts Officer at Lynton Road Neighbourhood who kept me informed during the day of what was happening. Without going into too much detail I understand that there was an individual leak in the tenant property from a water pipe which subsequently went down and because the pipes are located above the main intake electrical cupboards in the block it caused all the electrics to fail. Now what we are looking at in the very short term and is very simple and obviously needs to be done sooner rather than later is to make the electrical intake cupboard completely waterproof so that any future burst don't affect the electricity supply in the block. I understand that tenants have been kept informed throughout the process and I will make sure Members for the wards are kept updated. Just so that you know there was a subsequent problem today with Grasmere which was not Thames Water but on this occasion by Transco and that's caused problems there with cooking and heating and such is the problem there and again the neighbourhood have been there all day today. I actually plan to visit Tustin tomorrow to have a look for myself and we will continue to put pressure on the utility companies but as I said earlier we are restricted by how much they can do, but I will continue to put pressure on them.

19. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

In the past two years how many public houses have been developed into dwelling houses. Please provide the information by ward.

RESPONSE

Since October 2001 planning permission has been granted to convert or redevelop 22 public houses in Southwark to provide dwelling houses, flats or in one case a hostel.

These have been fairly evenly distributed around the north and centre of the borough as follows:

East Walworth	3
Newington	3
Cathedrals	2
Chaucer	2
Faraday	2
Grange	2
South Bermondsey	2
Riverside	2
Brunswick Park	1
Camberwell Green	1
Livesey	1
Peckham	1

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

Can I thank the Member for her answer. It indicates that in the last 2 years we have lost 22 pubs, in 5 years 55 and in 10 years it will probably be 110 at this rate. I am asking if she could have discussion with her officers to ensure that this Council receives a report back and what measures can be taken to deal with the situation of the loss of pubs in Southwark particularly the traditional pub. I think the situation in Southwark is renowned for its history and tourism and I think there is a need to maintain some of those pubs. The other thing is at the Planning Committee in most cases 70/80% and the cases when a pub is up for demolition we usually have a lot of community showing concerns about for the community facilities they provide so I do think there is a need to have a look at it and report back.

RESPONSE

I would like to thank the Member for his supplementary question. I know its something that Councillor Graham himself in concert with other planning colleagues has been concerned about over the last few years actually. The Council has operated a de facto policy of not granting permissions for turning pubs into residential developments unless I believe the pubs have been marketed as public houses for a couple of years and there aren't any expression of interest from landlords and publicans and I am afraid it is a regrettable trend London-wide a lot of pubs get turned into residential units. I hope this will reassure somewhat Councillor Graham this is something that I and colleagues during the preliminary process leading up to the publication of the first draft of the new Southwark Borough Plan discussed in some detail and Councillor Thomas has just reminded me that in fact as we discussed what we consider essential services and we are trying to obviously arrange things so that people do not have to go too far to essential services he has just pointed out to me that we did clearly say that we consider public houses were essential services because they operate in all sort of ways and are used for things other than actual drinking for all sort of socialising and social event. This is something that I am very happy to discuss further with Officers. I would hope that this will appear in the next draft of the UDP in any event but I certainly take your comments on board and I am very supportive of them.

20. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU

Can the Executive Member for Regeneration tell the Council how much money the Council is giving to provide Christmas lighting in the Peckham South Centre for this festive season?

RESPONSE

The Council's total Festive Lighting budget allocation for 2002/2003 was £36,000. For 2003/2004 this budget has been increased to £36,900.

The Council's street lighting team estimates that £18,700 will be allocated to be spent in Peckham to provide Christmas lighting. This will include lighting in Rye Lane, as well as on Peckham High Street from the Town Hall to the Queens Road area. This will involve providing some new fittings on lamp

columns as well as feature lighting in the main Town Centre area. However as Peckham High Street is the responsibility of Transport for London, their permission will be required and at present this has yet to be decided.

Additionally, at the request of the Peckham Town Centre Management Group a small grant of £3,000 has been made through the Greater Peckham Alliance SRB to provide a range of Christmas activities and events in and around Peckham Square. This will include a specially commissioned light display and Christmas lights for the trees in the Square; a ferris wheel, a carousel and performances over the weekend of 13th and 14th December. We are also looking at commissioning a local arts organisation to make a Christmas tree for the square.

21. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Can the Executive Member outline any compensation arrangements that are in place for market traders currently based within the Elephant and Castle shopping centre and who have indicated that they do not wish to re-locate to Walworth Road.

RESPONSE

The question is rather premature as compensation payable by the Council as an acquiring authority would normally only arise where land assembly is proceeding under a confirmed Compulsory Purchase Order. No decisions in this regard have been made or are required to be made at this point.

At the present time the Shopping Centre is owned freehold by Key Property Investments, a joint venture involving St Modwens. The various traders in the centre, whether shopkeepers or stallholders, have contractual rights in the form of leases and licences with St Modwens, not with the Council.

For the Council's part the Elephant and Castle scheme is not about damaging businesses; it is concerned with boosting the opportunities for enterprise and business growth. As I have reported previously, 89% of comparison-shopping by this borough's residents crosses Southwark's borders to other town centres. Our businesses need to recover this and we are encouraging them to do so through arrangements we are putting in place to support local businesses through a period of change and help them to seize the opportunities that the regeneration will provide. Business Extra has been established through the Single Regeneration Budget programme to support business development and the Council has already convened the Town Centre Liaison Group as a working body composed of the traders, the shopping centre landlord and the Council to ensure that shopping centre businesses secure the maximum benefits from the planned new developments.

This is further bolstered by the Framework for Development proposals, which have recently been through a three and a half month consultation exercise after being launched at a business breakfast for shopping centre businesses in the shopping centre at the beginning of June. Within the Framework are measures to encourage the development and occupation of new retail and leisure floor space along the frontages of the Walworth Road in order to restore a connection through continuous trading frontages from south of East Street to the new heart of the Elephant and Castle.

All of this is absolutely consistent with the Council's commitment to working closely and positively with local business to protect services to local people both through and beyond the rollout of the regeneration scheme.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Officers responsible for the Elephant & Castle Master Plan have reputedly made it clear to traders within the existing centre that the intention is to massively reduce the number of retail units within the regeneration. Naturally

this is causing enormous disquiet and uncertainty with the traders. Does the Executive Member not agree therefore that such comments by Officers of their wish to reduce such retail provision means that some traders will lose out, will have to cease trading and will deserve some substantial compensation.

RESPONSE

I have to say that any such view being perpetuated is really largely mischief making simply because as part of the programme of redevelopment we made it very plain and indeed the consultation responses have supported this very strongly we intend to get rid of the existing shopping centre does not in any way shape or form mean that we intend for there to be any reduction in retail capacity and retail units. In fact quite the reverse is the case. At the moment as it says in the answer something like 11-12% of people in Southwark actually shop in Southwark. It must be barmy that the Council does not try and encourage a variety of retail opportunities so that we capture what is an enormous market which is currently not being employed within our borough. Its absolutely this Council's view that we should maximise retail opportunities and safeguard those existing retail units which provide a very diverse service that's why we are looking at a town centre and high street model – that's why we are talking to traders in the shopping centre and market traders around the area – that's why we set up a liaison group and we invite the owner of the shopping centre, St Modwens to take part in those meetings. The scaremongering that's going on and I have to say that I am afraid seems to have taken a particular political hue is not very helpful. It won't stop us developing an Elephant and Castle for the future which we will all be proud – it won't stop us maximising the retail opportunities for those people who live into the area and will move into the area – it won't stop us encouraging employment and enterprise increasing the opportunities available and it would be helpful if people stop perpetrating rumours and nonsense.

22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

Does the Executive Member welcome the £7.8 million of new money awarded to Southwark by the Labour Government as part of the latest Neighbourhood Renewal Fund allocation, and does she agree that this significant investment is further evidence of the government's commitment to providing Southwark with resources to fund regeneration in the borough?

RESPONSE

Under the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Southwark has been allocated £10.1 million Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) in 2004/5 and £13.5 million in 2005/6. This is above the original announcement of £7.9 million for each year. The additional allocation is in recognition of the significant challenges still faced by the borough in respect of meeting the national 'floor targets' for educational achievement, life expectancy, participation in employment and reducing crime.

Councillors have recently received the Southwark Alliance progress report for the period 2001-2003, setting out some of the major interventions supported by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The new NRF allocation will enable Southwark Alliance as the local strategic partnership, working through its

partner agencies and associated partnerships, to continue its work to address deprivation and exclusion in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The Alliance has agreed its Commissioning and Financial Strategy 2004-2006 for use of these resources and detailed proposals are being worked on by the major themed partnerships and local neighbourhood teams.

The NRF resources provide a significant investment for multi-agency interventions that it would be difficult for core agencies to make from mainstream budgets. In recognition of this, Southwark Alliance is working closely with the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Greater London Enterprise and other bodies in making representation to central government as part of the current Comprehensive Spending Review for NRF to continue beyond 2006.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

Thank you very much for the answer Councillor Bowman. Given that you accept that it is thanks to this Labour Government that we do have this significant additional investment and funding now available in Southwark will you ensure please that in all future relevant Southwark publications such as Southwark Life it is made clear that it is this Labour Government which is responsible for this funding and not a Liberal Democrat Tory Council.

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD PORTER

I would like to thank Councillor John for his supplementary question. I think you will be aware that all Council publications are on a non-political basis. We certainly won't be giving the Labour Government any credit at all for giving this money to us in our publications and indeed there are a number of areas that the Government are still failing to address; to address the needs of some of the poorest people in our society. Pensioners are still living below the poverty line. We have working family tax credit which has been administered in the most appalling manner and a failure to invest within the Council housing within this borough. Perhaps these are areas they want to look at next.

23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

Can the Executive Member outline her personal views on how she feels the Aylesbury New Deal for Communities (NDC) scheme has progressed since May 2002?"

RESPONSE

In May 2002 the Government Office for London end of year review awarded the NDC the lowest banding - C and, following a visit by Lord Rooker, threatened to withdraw the NDC funding unless significant progress was seen to be made..

On July 23rd 2002 Executive Committee agreed the Future Strategy for the Aylesbury and at the end of July, signed up, along with other partners, to the Aylesbury Manifesto. These two documents have guided activity on the Aylesbury since that date.

Some of the achievements to date include:

The development of a recruitment strategy and the appointment of an interim management team. The NDC thus has a full complement of staff to implement the Aylesbury Manifesto and the NDC Delivery Plan. Since February 2003 8 permanent appointments have been made, 4 of whom are residents on the estate.

Major work has been undertaken on a comprehensive review of governance resulting in the NDC Partnership Board adopting Terms of Reference and signing up to a code of conduct.

The development of a physical renewal strategy, involving close resident consultation. The investigation of options to increase the capital funding

available for improvement. Support to the Aylesbury NDC in setting up the Citizens' Jury to review these options

The appointment of a Neighbourhood Housing Manager, dedicated to the Aylesbury, the creation of a Street Action Team to address issues of cleanliness and anti-social behaviour, and the appointment of community wardens, funded jointly by the council and the NDC.

The carrying out of planned preventative maintenance works in two areas of the estate and the improvement to lighting across most of the estate.

The establishment of the Aylesbury Task Force whereby senior officers of the council and its partners can meet to review the future strategy. The creation of an operational group to enable workers from all organisations operating in the area to meet together and address problems jointly.

Support for the Aylesbury SureStart to provide a parents and Childrens Centre in Chumleigh Gardens

Other achievements to date include:

- The launch of the Aylesbury Healthy Living Network – a partnership of 9 local organisations, receiving funding from the NDC and NOF, which will provide a range of healthy living activities including; benefits advice, health education, cultural activities, mental health support, physical activity, volunteering opportunities, gardening, IT classes, needlecraft, social activities and cultural events. The six part time staff are accommodated in an office in the Thurlow Lodge Community Hall.
- The opening of the extension to Tykes Corner, so young babies and children can play safely alongside their carers
- The new Childminding Centre at Beaconsfield Road opened in January 2003, a joint project between the NDC and SureStart Aylesbury Plus. The Centre has already attracted a significant number of people interested in training as childminders.
- In February 2003, recruitment workshops took place for the Neighbourhood Wardens and we now have 7 wardens employed on the estate. Shortlisting is currently taking place for a further five wardens for the estate.
- The launch of 'Inspire' will take place on the 31st of October 2003, a new arts, learning and community centre based in the crypt at St Peters Church.
- The official launch of At Work recruitment agency took place in June 2003. Since opening in February 2003, At Work has registered over 200 candidates from the local community
- In October 2003, AMP launched its radio station for the Aylesbury Estate. AMP has also run a very successful publishing and printing course in conjunction with London College of Printing and supported by the NDC and 10 local residents have so far graduated from this course.
- Work has commenced on the construction of the new Missenden Play Scheme, which is due to open in 2004. In addition, two of the existing kickabout areas on the estate are being refurbished.
- In October, the NDC is due to launch its new website which will give local residents more access to information regarding the NDC and projects that could be of help to them.

- Contributed funding to the Burgess Park Sports Pitches Project, a £2.1 million project with the principal funding from the Football Foundation and NOF.
- In partnership with the Council started a project to build a Lifelong Learning Centre in Michael Faraday Primary School.

This year's Annual Review took place on the 23rd June 2003. The basis of the review was the 2002/03 Performance Management process, documentation and scoring. This has replaced the banding mechanism used in previous years. The review resulted in the performance of the Aylesbury NDC Partnership being banded 3 (the middle of five performance bands), which is classified as a 'Fair Partnership'. The significant progress since the last annual review that the Partnership had made was also noted and recognised by Government Office for London and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, as well as by Lord Rooker in this visit earlier this month.

SUUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

Can I thank the Executive Member for the answer to my question. Of all of the achievements that has been listed in this list in our answer the one that is prominent by its absence is the one about social inclusion and given that the neighbourhood renewal and the New Deal scheme was set-up to deal with social exclusion could she tell us whether this aspect of the scheme has been enhanced by the dismissal of the Aylesbury Black & Minority Ethnic Group from the NDC Board and could she tell us what she and her administration is going to do about it.

RESPONSE

I would like to thank the Member for his supplementary question. I think the Councillor in question would probably be more in favour the details of this than I am because you were certainly sitting on the board for quite a long period of time until fairly recently as an appointee of the Council so I would just remind him that the suspensions are pending and an investigation into the circumstances surrounding a letter that was written to the Government Office for London and I really don't think it is appropriate bearing in mind that there is an investigation underway at the moment for me to say much more at this time though clearly when that investigation has been concluded and conclusions have been reached it will be entirely appropriate for that to be discussed perhaps in the form of another Council question.

24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SUPPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MOISE

You will have heard about the vicious assault by 10+ youths on a young man during the early evening in Russia Dock Woodland. There are all too frequent assaults, many of which are attacks on international visitors to the youth hostel.

Following the recent meeting held between Canada Water Community Forum, the Mayor for London, the Borough Commander, Val Shawcross AM and Rotherhithe residents, what steps is this Council taking to address this growing problem in Rotherhithe?

RESPONSE

1. Prior to the serious assault on the 21st September, the Council and Police were working closely on joint initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour in Rotherhithe. This involved joint operations with the Park Rangers, Mounted Branch of the Metropolitan Police Service and the Local Sector Officers. Action was also identified to design out anti-social behaviour by investment in developing Mellish Fields and investment in the Russia Dock Woodland. In addition plans were developed for more detached youth work in Rotherhithe.
2. Following the serious assault a partnership meeting have been held to agree the following action plan to fast track and enhance the above activity as follows:-

Short term measures:

- Ring fencing of Rotherhithe sector police resources for use only in the Rotherhithe area
- Police Community Support Officers re-deployed from other areas to cover Rotherhithe temporarily

Medium-long term measures:

- 7 new Police Community Support Officers working in the area by Christmas.
- School beat officers to work closely with the secondary schools in Rotherhithe regarding anti social behaviour.
- Joint Police operations around Canada Water and Rotherhithe underground stations.
- Mobile CCTV to be deployed.
- Tackling anti social behaviour through increased presence of Police, rangers and PCSO to target vehicle & bike crime and arson.
- Improvements to youth activities and facilities in the area.
- Re-development of the Mellish Fields site and investment in the Russia Dock Woodlands.
- On-going programme of environmental improvements and investment to design out dark and isolated areas.
- Creation of a community focused problem solving forum.
- Review and improvement of information sharing processes between agencies.

Communications:

- Letter to Southwark tenants reminding them of their obligations around anti social behaviour – Councillor Bassom is asking housing associations in the area to send out similar letter.
 - Leaflet being distributed to all residents in the area detailing what's being done, reassurance of crime levels in area, and how to report crimes.
3. Following a meeting on the 8th October called by me further action was agreed:
- Deployment of the mobile police station to the area starting 25th October, and continuing past Firework night.
 - Breakdown in response times to Rotherhithe to be provided to local Surrey Docks councillors (Councillors Hubber, Rajan and O'Brien). A report for September has been compiled by the Sector Inspector, and a further is report in hand.
 - Establish community problem solving forum- Youth Offending Team and Rangers are now working with the police deployment of the mobile police station referred to in 1 above.
 - Joint operations around Rotherhithe underground station with British Transport Police and TfL-

- Establishment of working group to look at issues to deal with youth crime in Rotherhithe
 - Letters to all tenants reminding them of their obligations around anti-social behaviour
 - Assess the possibility of the deployment of the KARROT bus to the Russia Dock Woodlands area
 - Confirmation that the new mobile CCTV system will be deployed in Russia Dock Woodlands at the earliest opportunity
 - Confirmation as to why the BMX track has been funded and consulted upon, but not built
 - Youth Offending Team to use Mad About Football programme, as an intelligence gathering operation
 - Youth Offending Team to look at people on reparation being deployed in the area to remove graffiti etc - YOT actioning this activity
 - Communications group to look at literature being sent to all households before the end of October- Leaflet drafted and will be sent out.
4. Two arrests have been made following the assault referred to in the question. These people have been bailed to return for a decision on charging. No decision has been made yet.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MOISE

I would like to thank Councillor Porter for his response. The only problem is it's taken a long while for any action to be taken. The question that I am going to put to him is that although you have listed what's going to happen communication wise and you have listed what plans and what you are going to introduce to tackle the violent attacks on people living in and around the area I would like to know whether you have actually read the Best Value report on Community Safety because it actually differs from your answer in that there is no co-ordination between the Police and the Council and various agencies that should be dealing with anti-social behaviour and secondly in answer to Dominic's question I might be able to help Councillor Porter here – he won't get a ward breakdown of the sort of troubles that are happening in different wards in respect of anti-social behaviour because this report also says in great detail that there is no data been collated on a ward basis so if there is no data being collected on a ward basis how can you claim to be tackling it and how can you claim to be going into this particular area which has had some problem for sometime and say that you are going to tackle it by putting a few letters through the box, so I would like a real response here Councillor Porter and secondly the breakdown response time – you say you are going to give these to Councillors Hubber, Rajan and O'Brien. Since these Councillors spent most of their time in my ward picking up casework on the door and neglecting their own ward, could you find out what's going to happen because they seem to be neglecting their ward – too busy spending their time in my ward.

RESPONSE

Let me first of all take this opportunity to pay tribute to my colleagues in Surrey Docks Ward. We really have worked hard to rectify some of the problems that have been happening in that area. Committee has been set up to look at some of the specific problems that have been occurring on the Rotherhithe peninsula. All the agencies have come together: the Council, the Police and the Youth Service to help to address on these problems. We are making real progress here – yes Councillor Moise I have read the Best Value review of Community Safety – you obviously haven't I am afraid because this is the first example of all agencies working together to make a real difference and with regards to the Ward breakdown for anti-social behaviour orders; well its not difficult is it you find out where the Order was granted, you look on the map and you see which Ward it is in.

25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SUPPORT FROM COUNCILLOR KENNY MIZZI

Will the Executive Member for Community Safety list the number of burglaries and serious assaults that have taken place in Southwark since May 2002 and will he inform the Council

- (a) if he thinks that people convicted of crimes in Southwark and who are sentenced to prison should be entitled to vote in elections, and
- (b) if he agrees with the Member of Parliament for North Southwark & Bermondsey that first time burglars should not be sent to jail?

RESPONSE

The number of burglaries recorded in Southwark from May 2002 to September 2003 totalled 6,776. This figure is made up of 4,449 (66%) residential burglaries, and 2,327 (34%) non-residential burglaries.

Residential burglary in Southwark has consistently maintained 5th place in the Crime Reduction Partnership (CDRP) family of similar boroughs* over this period.

Serious assaults have been defined as Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) for the purpose of this response.

In the period from May 2002 to September 2003 2,689 serious assaults were recorded in Southwark. This was made up of 346 (13%) GBH and 2,343 (87%) ABH.

For the wider category of Violence Against the Person [which includes all assaults, both serious and less serious] Southwark has fluctuated between 4th and 5th in the CDRP family* league table over this period.

* (Boroughs included in CDRP family 2 are; Tower Hamlets, Islington, Hackney, Lambeth, Southwark, Newham, Haringey, Ealing, Greenwich, Lewisham, Brent)

(a) The proposal to give voting rights to some prisoners is part of the rehabilitation process, enabling those people who are soon to be released into the community, an idea of their civic responsibilities. The vote will not be given to all prisoners, but should be seen in the context of a broader resettlement and intergration programme.

(b) The Member of Parliament for North Southwark and Bermondsey has said that not all burglars should *automatically* be sent to jail and I understand he is calling for tougher community sentences for all non-violent offenders. Contrary to reports, there are no specific plans for burglars and it has always been made clear that domestic burglary should be treated as a serious offence. In cases where a burglar confronts, threatens or attacks the householder I would expect a prison sentence to be automatic. In cases where no such confrontation occurred, the court would be free to choose from a range of sentences, from the community payback to prison, according to the circumstances of the offence and offender. In less serious cases (for example burglary of un-staffed commercial premises or a garage) a community sentence would be more appropriate. *This does not represent a departure from current sentencing practice.* Currently about half of those sentenced for burglary (of all types) are sent to prison, while 80% of domestic burglars appearing in Crown Court are sent straight to prison. I would expect a small number of burglars who are currently sent to prison to receive a tough community punishment. Most of the burglars affected would, however, be those who are already receiving community sentences.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KENNY MIZZI

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. I was wondering if Councillor Porter could elaborate on which categories of prisoners would one be given the vote and two not be given the vote under the Liberal Democrat policy proposals and secondly how he would explain to people in Southwark who had been burgled that real justice had actually been done if the person who burgled their property was not sent to jail. Is this not another example of wishy washy Liberal Democratic policies failing victims of crime.

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Mizzi very much for his supplemental question. In terms of certain burglaries not being sent to prison I have to say that's his own Shadow Home Secretary Oliver Letwin has also supported and in terms of voting rights being given to prisoners, there are currently 18 European countries I think we are the only country together with Ireland that doesn't give votes to prisoners. I think its quite right in certain circumstances that may be the appropriate thing to do.

26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SUPPORT FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Before Railtrack went into receivership, talks were in progress with them about using derelict land around South Bermondsey railway station for a motorbike scramble track. Could the Executive Member tell me whether these talks have been kickstarted with Network Rail?

RESPONSE

South Bermondsey ward and the north part of Livesey ward have been identified as one of the five top priority neighbourhoods by the Local Strategic Partnership. Local needs surveys have identified a distinct lack of open space in this area and a need for the provision of more youth facilities in the area.

Whilst undertaking negotiations on the Millwall Walkway, both myself and Simon Hughes M.P. met with Network Rail to discuss the possibility of building a bike track on their land. At the time, they promised to look into the possibility of ceding this land to ourselves. Unfortunately, despite a number of reminders, a response has not been forthcoming.

I am happy to arrange a further meeting with the relevant parties to progress this matter further.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

I very much like to thank the Executive Member for his answer to my question. I really would welcome some progress on this. Can I ask when you expect to meet with Network Rail about this issue and request that myself and Ward Members from other neighbouring wards who have concerns also be invited to this meeting.

RESPONSE

I thank Councillor Rajan for her supplemental question. As part of the Millwall Walkway project we do meet with Network Rail on a fairly regular basis. Our next meeting won't be for several months, so I will be happy to set up a special meeting and invite all the relevant Ward Councillors to that meeting in the next few weeks.

27. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR NORMA GIBBES

Does the Executive Member for Education & Culture agree with me that voluntary groups such as Southwark School Governors' Forum, Southwark Black Education Forum and Southwark Parents' Forum are important organisations that ensure stakeholders participate and contribute to education and cultural services across the borough. Could he tell council what contact he has had with these Forums in the past 6 months?

RESPONSE

The participation and contribution that representative stakeholder groups can make to the Education and Culture Department is both valuable and valued. All three of these groups are invited to attend the Admissions Forum and the Department is committed to working with them and other representative groups to promote the better involvement of all stakeholders.

The Executive Member meets regularly with the Chair of the School Governors' Forum (the Southwark Governors' Association), Martin Seaton, although the Association itself has met only sporadically over the past eighteen months. The Chair of the Association has been asked to provide nominations to sit on the Asset Management Plan Advisory Group. In addition, there is Governor representation on the Schools Forum (although this has not been formally organized through the Association) and the Director of Schools Services and other senior officers meet regularly with Chairs of Governors.

The Southwark Black Education Forum is the sixth group on the School Organisation Committee. All these groups are sent the draft School Organisation Plan for comment as part of the consultation process. Although I do not attend the regular meetings of the Black Education Forum, I do maintain informal contact with several members of it.

The Education & Culture Department has supported the Southwark Parents' Forum by providing space in the South London Science and Technology Centre to hold its meetings. I have been in contact with the Convener of the Forum but it would appear that this group has met only very irregularly in the past eighteen months.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR NORMA GIBBES

I understand that there are difficulties in the functioning of these groups. Certainly with two of the groups there are great difficulties as a result of lack of funding from the authority since last year. Will the Executive Member confirm that the funding for Southwark Black Education Forum and Southwark Parents Forum will be restored

RESPONSE

Unfortunately two of these groups one has to say have been virtually defunct for the past 2 years. I speak frequently to the secretaries or convenors of both of them; that is Martin Seaton for the Governors and Ann Goss for the parents. I think former Councillor Gos admitted to me that her group – I think they managed to cobble up something to speak to OPM but she did admit to me that they had not met for 2 years so I do not think it is a very useful thing for the Council to do to give to groups that are virtually defunct.

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

How does the Executive Member rate the performance of Cambridge Education Associates (CEA) to date ?

RESPONSE

When CEA took over the management of delivery of services to schools for the Council on 1 August 2003 there were significant organisational, structural, management, service and performance issues that needed to be addressed. During this first stage of the contract CEA have been engaged on an assessment of the services they have taken over and an identification of areas of priority.

It is inevitable that it will take time for all the necessary changes to be identified and implemented and in some areas, for example pupil performance, significant improvements cannot be achieved in the short term. However, progress to date is satisfactory. CEA have recruited managers with a significant range of education experience who have demonstrated that they appreciate what needs to be done and are aware of the demands ahead. CEA have successfully started to identify and evaluate the key challenges they will face. This is particularly evident in the SEN service which is being reviewed in an appropriate, holistic and systematic manner.

Good relationships are developing between CEA managers and stakeholders. Regular meetings are held between senior CEA staff and the Council's monitoring team and reports are provided monthly on progress against the contract performance indicators. CEA will be preparing more detailed reports on the delivery of the contract on a quarterly basis. CEA have submitted the first draft of the Strategic Management Plan and discussions are currently taking place to develop and improve it. A major report on education performance will go to Executive in January 2004. CEA have successfully engaged with London Challenge to ensure that our secondary schools receive additional support to promote a good educational experience for their pupils.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

Thanks very much for the answer. Can I ask the Executive Member how he would rate the quality of consultation carried out by CEA to date.

RESPONSE

Perhaps you would like to say consultation with whom?

I think that is for you and the CEA, for example on the major plans on any major innovations, any major changes.

I think that with for example the secondary strategy its had to be done very quickly because the Government made clear that it was going to make an announcement on November 11 and the Ministries visiting the 5 boroughs on the 12th. We have to have a secondary strategy in, which I believe did go to Scrutiny before that date to negotiate and tweak with the London Challenge Team so that on November 11 we can have a statement which has been agreed between the authority and the Government so I think on several things CEA has had to move very quickly and that has inevitably meant that there hasn't been much time as one would like for consultation, but as much consultation as possible has gone on.

29. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

What action has been taken by Southwark Council to recover the rent owed to Langbourne Primary School by the nursery formerly on the premises, and when will the money be paid to the School?

RESPONSE

A private nursery occupied part of the Langbourne school premises until June of this year. Following court proceedings, the Council obtained re-possession of the premises but has not secured rental from the nursery in respect of its occupation.

It has been recognised that the school has planned its budget on the basis that rental income would be received. In these circumstances and to avoid the risk of a budget deficit arising from this issue, payment equivalent to the annual rental sum is being made by the Council to the school budget.

30. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COUNCILLOR ALFRED BANYA

Which budget will the £50,000 improvements to the East Street market toilets come from?

RESPONSE

The key constraint on public toilet provision generally is the resourcing of running costs. The provision of public toilets in the Borough has been subject to a mini Best Value Review, the results of which will be reported to the Executive later in the year.

East Street differs from the general provision as its running costs are met from the Street Trading Account paid from market trader's fees. The facilities for East Street are now in such a poor condition that they cannot be effectively maintained.

It has therefore been decided to allocate a one-off spend of up to £50K from the existing public toilets budget within the Environment and Leisure Department. The works are currently out to tender and will provide a modern facility that meets the needs to both street traders and other users of the market.

31. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

How many parking offences have been thrown out on appeal in the past two years because the road markings or signage do not conform with the requirements of the law and the parking tickets were therefore not issued validly? What percentage of successful appeals occur because of this?

RESPONSE

Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) subject to appeal on the basis of inadequate signage or lining will be included in those PCNs cancelled either by the Council's own Representation Officers or the Traffic and Parking Appeals Service (TAPAS). Inadequate signage or lining is not a specific grounds for appeal but such appeals are included either in the PCNs cancelled by Representation Officers due to Parking Enforcement contractor error or by the TAPAS.

The figure for such cancellations are as follows:-

	2002/03	2003/04(April-Sep)
Total PCN served	154,833	80,677
Cancelled to contractor error	452	177
Cancelled by TAPAS	898	370
TOTAL	1350 (0.87%)	547(0.67%)

32. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

Would the Executive Member please report on what progress is being made in reducing the risk of harm from possible car accidents to pupils at the Charter School?

RESPONSE

The Council has taken the following actions to improve the safety of children using Red Post Hill, particularly pupils from Charter School.

1. Following a site visit in August orders have been issued for the following actions to be undertaken:
 - Remarking of 'School Keep Clear' marking
 - Erection of a 'Bend Ahead' sign opposite North Dulwich Rail Station
 - Erection of a 'Bend Ahead' sign outside 54/56 Red Post Hill
 - 'Slow' markings on the road (x2)
2. The site has been added to Transport for London's list of sites where mobile speed cameras will be deployed.
3. A bid for funding for a Safer Routes to School Program for schools in this area has been made as part of the 2004/5 Borough Spending plan bid. Southwark will be informed of TfL's decision on this in mid November.

33. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY

Could the Executive Member for Environment and Transport please outline the original repair and maintenance budget for each park in the borough, the level of cuts made for each park and the reason for the cuts?

RESPONSE

There has been no reduction in the repairs and maintenance budget for Parks - there has been an overall increase of over 15% and each major park has seen an increase in its budget. There has been a small re-assignment of budgets in the case of play equipment and tier 2 and 3 parks. In the first instance introduction of new equipment and the completion of more work "in house" has reduced the budget requirement for this cost-centre. In the case of tier 2 and 3 sites a number have transferred to the Integrated Cleansing Contract and there has been a subsequent reduction in the budget allocation to the cost centre. In neither instance has there been a net loss to the Parks repairs and maintenance budget the cash has instead, been re-allocated within the overall budget to be used more effectively:

Repairs and Maintenance

Principal Budget 2002/03 327,416

Burgess Park	25,000
Southwark Park	25,000
Peckham Rye Park	25,000
Dulwich Park	25,000
Pest Control	20,000
Play Equipment	60,000
Tier 2&3	147,416

Principal Budget 2003/04 378,776

Burgess Park	35,000
Southwark Park	53,000
Peckham Rye Park	30,000
Dulwich Park	30,000
Nunhead Cemetery	15,000
Pest Control	20,000
Play Equipment	50,000
Tier 2&3	145,776

34. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

With the one million pound scheme planned for Walworth Road, can the Executive member with responsibility for the environment, please inform me if he has similar plans for Rye Lane?

RESPONSE

The scheme for Walworth Road is the result of a successful bid in response to the request for submissions for a road safety demonstration project in main road shopping areas by the Government's Department for Transport. The Walworth Road was selected for the bid on the basis of the very large number of casualties observed and therefore a suitable candidate for consideration. The Walworth Road had previously been earmarked for a Streets-for-People improvement in the Council's Interim Local Implementation Plan (ILIP). The Department for Transport has not indicated that there will be another bidding round under this initiative. However, the Council supports improvements across the borough and will continue to be pro-active in pursuing bidding opportunities. Bids to make improvements in and around Peckham town centre have been made in the annual bid document to Transport for London (the Borough Spending Plan). Also, the Peckham Programme is seeking funding sources to upgrade the paving and tackle grotspots along Rye Lane in the immediate future.

35. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Is the Executive Member aware of blue badge theft being a particular problem in Southwark? Is there a particular mechanism in place for reissuing stolen badges which reduces as far possible any hardship/inconvenience caused to the user?

RESPONSE

The total number of issued blue badges currently stands at 7,651. In the last 6 months 209 (2.7%) have been reported as either lost or stolen. Over the equivalent period during 2002 152 were reported as lost or stolen. It is felt that the 33% increase is connected to the introduction of the Congestion Charge. The current system does not differentiate between lost and stolen badges.

There is a mechanism for efficient replacement of badges. If the person who is issued the badge reports to the relevant office and has the correct documentation which includes:

- Identification / proof of address
- Report from insurance company / Police or relevant crime number
- Or if someone is collecting a new badge of behalf of the owner a letter of authorisation and their own proof of identity

This process can be completed with the relevant documentation is in place within 24 - 48 hours of the badge going missing. It is estimated that around 90% of badges that are lost or stolen are replaced within 2 working days.

The Social Services Department is in the process of setting up a system with colleagues who are responsible for parking control to ensure a more effective flow of intelligence with respect to lost or stolen badges.

36. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

Would the Executive Member for Environment and Transport advise us as to the reasons why Transport for London (TfL) refused to pay for the promised Underhill Road Consultation Exercise and what steps he is taking to restart this process given the traffic difficulties in the area recently recognised by Transport 2000 by their shortlisting of Underhill Road as one of the worst rat runs in Britain?

RESPONSE

Transport for London (TfL) have stated that due to financial restraints funding could not be identified for the progression of a detailed traffic management scheme for the Underhill Road Area during Spring/Summer 2003. However they are to review funding commitments after November 2003 and will reconsider this bid at such time.

In addition the Council is still awaiting the results of the latest Borough Spending Plan (BSP) submission to TfL. This document includes a financial bid for the Underhill Road Area 20 mph Zone. The results are due to be issued to boroughs during November 2003.

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