

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
ORDINARY**

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 6 2006

MEMBER'S QUESTION TIME

1. QUESTION TO THE MAYOR FROM COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY

Does the Mayor agree that the chauffeur/civic attendant/mace bearer performs an important civic role?

RESPONSE

Yes, I agree

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY

Yes thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to thank you for your answer and I do have a supplemental for you and I would like to start by saying I entirely agree with you. In the light of this I would like to ask you whether you support the proposals to outsource part of the service which might mean you did not have a civic attendant with you when you attend civic events.

RESPONSE

Thank you Councillor Colley for your supplemental question. It is true there is an officer-led review currently ongoing and it would be improper for me as a member of the council to comment or pre-judge the outcome of that.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Can the leader demonstrate that the residents of Southwark are satisfied with the work of the council?

RESPONSE

The annual residents satisfaction survey, undertaken on the council's behalf by Ipsos MORI, indicates that there is growing satisfaction amongst residents with the council. From 2002, the proportion of residents saying they are very or fairly satisfied with the way Southwark council is running the borough, has increased from 59% to 65%. Just over three quarters of residents are satisfied with their area as a place to live, with a 50% increase since 2002, in the number of residents who are very satisfied.

The same survey also demonstrates that since 2002 there is increased satisfaction with a number of services provided by the council, including a 27% increase in levels of satisfaction with provision of recycling facilities, from 54% in 2002 to 81% now; 71% satisfaction with playschemes and crèches, a 29% increase since 2002; and a 17% improvement in street cleaning, up to 76% now from 59% in 2002.

Social tolerance and cohesion is high in Southwark - almost a third of residents agree strongly that the area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, 86% of all residents agreeing to one degree or another. Almost the same proportion think that the local area is a place where residents respect ethnic differences, 83% overall. Both of these measures have seen a 12% increase since 2004.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

In addition to the general customer satisfaction which the survey has provided in relation to the services of this council, can the leader give any specific examples of objective measures of the high quality of our services apart from this survey?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

Yes, alright then two spring to mind, the first is the 3* rating which the Social Services Department has received one of only 13 Councils in the country to have received this and I think it is testament to the extra-ordinary work that members of staff in that Department do in one of the most challenging areas in the whole of country. And the second is the news the Cobourg School has emerged top in the whole country in the value added league table. This is to look at the impact of teaching on children comparing Key Stage 2 result with Key Stage 4. And I know that would be particularly pleasing for Charlie Cheryl from the Pensioners Forum because he used to be the chair of governors at that school but I am very proud indeed that it is a Southwark school that has won that accolade this year and that's a mark differentiation to 5 years ago.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

During the week commencing November 13 the leader took part in a trip to the United States of America. Can the leader outline the purpose of the trip, who financed his travel and hospitality and give details of any activities that related to council business during the trip?

RESPONSE

My visit to the USA was a private one and not on council business – I did however take the opportunity to introduce myself to the Dean of Harvard College and I am hopeful that Southwark and Harvard can commemorate the 400th anniversary of John Harvard's birth next year.

All the appropriate declarations have been made in the register of member's interests.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

Mr. Mayor, I am very grateful to the leader for his answer and welcome the conversation he had with the dean of Harvard. Can I ask him, therefore, bearing in mind the importance he attaches to that, what steps he has taken to further the links which Southwark may have with Cambridge Massachusetts who were offering us twinning status last year?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

I don't know anything about that, but I will look into it and find out.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR NICHOLAS VINEALL

Royal Mail has decided to close the Herne Hill Sorting Office at 130 Herne Hill.

This facility is used by numerous Southwark residents in SE24.

- (a) Does the leader of the council share the views of Village ward councillors that the failure of Royal Mail to engage in any form of prior consultation with the local community is completely unacceptable;
- (b) Will he please write on behalf of the council to Adam Crozier, Chief Executive of Royal Mail, to urge Royal Mail to suspend the decision to close this office pending proper consultation with residents.

RESPONSE

We are concerned to ensure that the residents of Southwark are adequately served by vital public services, including those supplied by the Royal Mail.

We are disappointed at the lack of public consultation on the proposed closure of Herne Hill delivery office and transfer of services to the Camberwell office (due in June 2007).

Royal Mail has informed us that this is a commercial decision, and is being proposed to make the service more cost effective. Royal Mail has said that it will increase the methods by which residents can redeliver packages (internet and phone) so that there is less need to visit the office in person.

The final decision to close the Herne Hill office has not yet officially been made, and Royal Mail will consider any correspondence on the matter. The decision is due to be made by the end of the year. However, Royal Mail does not intend holding formal public consultations on the closure.

Despite Royal Mail not being compelled to consult on this matter, we will be writing to the chief executive to stress our concern about the lack of engagement in this matter.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI

What assessment has the leader made of recent government announcements about local enterprise growth initiative (LEGI) bids and Big Lottery funding?

RESPONSE

The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative is a joint departmental funding opportunity from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT). The LEGI programme has three key objectives:

- to increase total entrepreneurial activity among the population in deprived local areas;
- to support the sustainable growth - and reduce the failure rate - of locally-owned business in deprived areas; and
- to attract appropriate inward investment and franchising into deprived areas, making use of local labour resources.

In September 2006, Southwark submitted its LEGI bid titled 'Southwark Business'. The bid was for a comprehensive 10-year programme worth just over £80 million. The programme would deliver a raft of support services for new and existing business as well as promote inward investment into deprived areas.

It is very disappointing that although Southwark's bid was recognized as London's leading bid, it was not called for interview. The 2006 LEGI funding allocation announcement was made today as part of the Chancellors pre-budget report.

The shortlist of the Big Lottery Living Landmarks was announced in August. None of the bids from London have been short-listed.

It is striking that neither of these major public-funding streams have resulted in any bids from anyone in London being successful.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI

Mr Mayor, would the leader agree with me about how unfair it is that the bid from Southwark should be missing out. Will he agree to make more representations to government complaining about such treatment and demanding a fair allocation of the fund?

RESPONSE

Mr. Mayor, yes. It is extremely worrying that in Southwark we are about to lose major SRB funds which have been particularly directed around the north of the borough and at the Elephant and Castle with nothing in place to replace those. The fate of the LEGI bid. No London council had its LEGI bid approved this year despite some very high quality bids including Southwark's. Nothing from London got on to the Living Landmarks shortlist from the big lottery. This does begin to suggest a pattern of a government which thinks that London is doing quite nicely out of the Olympics, thank you, and isn't going to be directing its discretionary funding at London. And I think areas like Southwark which aren't going to directly benefit from the huge infrastructure investment into the Olympics are at risk and it shouldn't be forgotten that Southwark has levels of deprivation much greater than some of the boroughs which are going to benefit directly from the Olympic games. It is going to be a shame if we lose out because the lower Lee Valley is benefiting.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR GORDON NARDELL

What are the procedures for elected executive members signing off officers' advice on motions to full council assembly?

RESPONSE

Officer advice contained in reports is covered in the constitution within the member and officer protocol (see page 222). The same principles apply to officer advice on motions. The requirement is that officers provide clear, evidence-based advice and members take this into account as appropriate. There is no formal sign off by members in relation to such advice but where this raises issues of clarification, calls for further advice or options it is reasonable that officers consult appropriately.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR GORDON NARDELL

I'm grateful to the leader for the answer. Can I ask the leader a short supplementary? Can he assure council assembly that there is no routine practice of officers getting clearance from any executive member on officer advice on member's motions?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

I think this is covered by the response. The practice in the council is the practice in the council and has been since the dawn of time.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Question withdrawn.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Can the leader substantially refute all the allegations made in a recent edition of Private Eye relating to the working conditions and labour relations pertaining to workers in the call centre?

RESPONSE

Yes, I can – the article is factually untrue and ill informed.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Can I thank the Leader for his response. Could he substantially refute all the allegations rather than just saying that the article was inaccurate? Which aspects of the article were substantially inaccurate?

RESPONSE – THE LEADER

All of them! Well, we have a call centre - all allegations apart from the fact that the council has a Call Centre.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR OLA OYEWUNMI

Can the leader explain how the deputy chief executive was appointed to that newly created post without prior executive approval?

RESPONSE

The present strategic director of health and community services Chris Bull has been the nominated deputy to the chief executive for a number of years. This position was confirmed within the strategic management report considered by the executive on December 13 2005. For example, when the previous chief executive retired Chris Bull became the acting chief executive for the interim period of three months, until the new chief executive took up the position. The proposal is that this now becomes his full-time responsibility. Effectively he will relinquish the roles of strategic director of health and communities and chief executive of PCT and occupy the deputy chief executive post full-time. This is a technical assimilation.

10. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES GURLING

In an article about recent management changes in the housing service in the South London Press on November 21 2006, Councillor Pakes is quoted as saying "we have spoken to tenants and residents and they are deeply concerned about the proposals". How many representations from tenants and residents have you received about the changes?

RESPONSE

I have received only one formal representation regarding the changes in the housing service.

As the deputy leader and executive member for housing I have, in the past few months, had the opportunity to listen to the views and concerns of tenants and residents about housing management services. Those tenants and residents that have spoken to me have indicated that urgent improvements were required in a number of key service areas. It is clear that progress has been made in the last four years but a step change is required to take the service to the next level of performance, with particular emphasis on the customer. This can only be achieved by making changes to the management of the service.

The change to the management structure is the first phase of the process which will lead to improved service delivery. I do understand there will be some tenants and residents that will have concerns and reservations about the changes. There will however be a programme of consultation on the new service delivery programme, and this has already started, which will provide the opportunity for housing users, particularly resident representatives in tenant and resident associations, area forums as well as tenant council and leaseholders council, to express their views about the service before any decisions are made about operational changes.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR J GURLING

Can I thank the deputy leader and executive member for housing for his answer. I am interested to hear that he has had one formal representation regarding the changes to the Housing Management and Housing Service. I am sure as a ward councillor he would have many representations about the housing management centre prior to the changes he is suggesting. Could he perhaps expand on how he is going to treat these changes to improve the quality of service for tenants?

RESPONSE - COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

I am very grateful for the question from Councillor Gurling. We have already implemented a range of services for improvements to Housing Management in particular we have put in floor walkers in the call centre that went in 10 days ago – we have already addressed the issue of variation of contracts between the direct labour service and external contractors, we have already directly met with each of the contractors to discuss ways to improve and of course we are going to be looking at ways to actually get the eventual repairs and maintenance contract that we do let to actually get greater value for residents in this borough.

11. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ANDREW PAKES

Who did the executive member for housing management consult on the contents of his letter to tenant and resident (TRA) representatives dated October 30 and what plans are now in place to consult tenants and leaseholder representatives with regard to the proposals to shift responsibility for housing management from the housing department to environment and leisure?

RESPONSE

I believe it is important that the representatives of tenants and residents are kept informed of changes that affect them. The letter that was sent to all tenant and residents associations and other key resident representatives is a tangible example of this commitment. I am responsible for the contents of that letter.

During the next few weeks an intensive, in depth consultation on service delivery arrangements will be taking place. The strategic director of environment and leisure will be attending all area housing forums in December and January as well as tenant council and leaseholders council. These are the primary forums for consultation. All recognised tenants and residents associations are represented at these forums so the opportunity is being used to obtain a direct contribution about the way that housing management services are delivered in the future.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR ANDREW PAKES

Thank you Mr Mayor – Can I thank the Executive member for giving us full answer to the question. I do have a short supplement. I am very pleased that he has confirmed my suspicion in the first part of his answer which is that he did not consult any tenants or residents as my question asked about the letter he sent out. He thinks it merely important to pass on information rather than consult and involve. But in respect of my supplemental, Mr Mayor, previous question he says he has had one formal representation. Now I am aware, as other people are, that two area forums, which are TRA reps, have rejected these proposals. On Monday night following a presentation by the executive director and executive member tenants' council rejected these proposals. Does he not regard those 3 formal bodies of this council as worthy of note as formal representations?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR K HUMPHREYS

I am grateful to Councillor Pakes for his reply. If Councillor Pakes had been at tenants' council he would have realised that tenants' council was inquorate that evening. Mr Mayor I have noted in recent times that some representatives on

scrutiny committee now believe that they are members of Southwark Council – that is not correct, if you are a co-opted member on a committee that does not give you membership of this council. I just want to deal with the points that first of all I have had one letter that was from the Thurlow Lodge TRA which I answered very firmly and very clearly that I believe that the proposals that I put forward will provide a better service and that is what I have heard from residents. As Councillor Pakes may know I also have attended both tenants' council and attended SGTO where again I put these proposals – there have been a group of maybe 3 or 4 people that have raised (one of whom is in the gallery because I recognise his voice) who have made various points on this but in the main I have had a very positive response from residents across the borough. It is unfortunate that the group over the other side seeks to whip-up issues on this I know by the fact that the gallery is emptied out quite considerably since we had our comfort break that perhaps it is not the issue that is burning residents in this borough quite the level that the Labour Group would like. Thank you Mr. Mayor.

12. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN JARDINE-BROWN

Will the executive member for housing management inform the council how well housing management is providing best value for money?

RESPONSE

The housing management service is measured by a number of annual performance indicators. These include government indicators, for example rent collection, as well as local indicators, for example customer service standards. A re-organisation of housing management services took place at the beginning of 2005. This followed a best value review of the services. During this review benchmarking was undertaken, which included comparing services with other housing management providers. Southwark withstood this comparison favourably.

Since the re-organisation performance in some aspects of the service has not progressed as well as anticipated and this is why a major housing improvement programme was commenced in mid summer. This will, without doubt, increase customer satisfaction and perceptions about the service. This in turn will increase the sense that tenants and leaseholders are receiving value for money.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR HELEN JARDINE-BROWN

Thank you Mr Mayor – yes I do have a supplemental question. First of all I would like to thank the Executive member for his answer then I would like to ask him if he has had a chance to compare the performance of Southwark in this regard with that of other neighbouring boroughs?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

I am very grateful for the question from Councillor Jardine-Brown. As Councillor Jardine-Brown will be aware the recent results of a District Audit performance in Labour control Lewisham were exceedingly poor – I am not going to quote the various list of complaints that came out of that because I know that would embarrass my colleagues on the other side. We know where we are going in terms of Lambeth. Lambeth as we all know had no proposals before the last

Council elections to have an ALMO and strangely they have an ALMO Immediately after that so when we hear promises and cries from the Labour Group about their great defending of tenants' rights we should remember that and we should also remember that it was a Labour Group that was the group that put forward whole stock transfer in this borough, a Labour Group that put it forward. Thank you.

13. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR EVRIM LAWS

To ask the executive member for housing management what steps he is taking to improve fuel efficiency of the council's housing current stock?

RESPONSE

The council has created a new housing energy team that will aim to improve energy management across the council's housing stock. This team will provide a new focus to this key activity, monitoring energy usage and developing ways of reducing it. This will result in both a better service for residents and reduced costs for the council.

The council is currently developing a climate change strategy and a combined heat and power draft (CHP) and insulation strategy as part of the council's overall sustainability programme. The strategies identify a number of policies and projects that will improve community heating and increase loft/cavity insulation levels for tenants and leaseholders.

There are also opportunities to provide district heating improvements via regeneration schemes already approved by the council. The heat and power element of the regeneration plan for the Elephant & Castle is expected to begin in July 2007.

These draft policies will help the council reduce CO2 emissions whilst supporting a range of objectives and targets such as the Home Energy Conservation Act requirement to increase domestic energy efficiency by 30% and BVPI 63 (Energy performance of local authority-owned dwellings).

The council is also reviewing the efficiency of smaller district heating schemes in terms of appropriateness and cost with a view to rationalising where sensible provision and management arrangements to ensure effective value for money services are in place.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR EVRIM LAWS

I would like to thank the executive member for his response and just point out that we have had a similar response from you in the past but I wonder what is the timetable for the improvements that you outline in your answer for all of them?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

I am grateful to the member for her question – I did not recall that I had actually answered the question on this before but I am very grateful to her for reminding me that I had – just to deal with a couple of the issues though these will be contained in a report particularly relating to combined heat and power which will be coming I believe sometime in around January to the executive. I would also

like to make a more general point which is one of the issues that I know has exercised a number of people across the borough is the increasing cost of gas and the impact that has had on some heating systems across the borough. One of the things that we are going to be looking at is part of the housing improvement programme and part of the changes in terms of service delivery in housing management is looking how we can bring those costs down – how we can actually look at the actual contract particularly in some of the smaller estates to bring those costs down so we provide greater value for money for our tenants and residents across this borough.

14. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Can the deputy leader outline the rules regarding the political impartiality of Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations (SGTO)? What action has the deputy leader taken over a recent flyer advertising a meeting allegedly called by SGTO, Unison and the Southwark Labour Group?

RESPONSE

The Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, the SGTO, is recognised by Southwark Council as an umbrella organisation that represents all tenant and residents associations and other bodies in Southwark. This organisation has been in place for many years and does act as the focal point for residents on many housing management issues.

The SGTO is expected to maintain a political impartiality and has a membership that is not affiliated to any political body. It does however have a campaigning responsibility which includes the expectation that it will challenge the council if it believes that proposals or decisions are not in the best interests of tenants and leaseholders.

The recent meeting that took at the Bells Gardens community centre was not organised by the SGTO. The hall was booked by a majority opposition councillor and the name of the SGTO was used by Unison and the majority opposition group in their publicity for the event without obtaining the consent or agreement of the SGTO executive.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

I would like to thank the executive member for Housing for his answer. Can I be absolutely clear about this. Southwark Labour councillors use the name of a neutral organisation representing the tenants of this borough without their permission. Can I ask if Southwark Labour Group have apologised for this outrageous act and has the matter been referred to the council's monitoring office and or the standards and perhaps we might consider or perhaps you could also sort of answer would you agree that perhaps instead of the chaos being this side of the chamber it is within their own party.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR K HUMPHREYS

Mr Mayor it is extremely unfortunate that members of the Labour Group booked a hall which from neutral meeting without gaining the agreement of the SGTO Executive as all members of this council are aware the SGTO Executive wrote to

all members of the council distancing themselves from that public meeting I understand that there is an officer investigation going in place as to the conduct of certain Councillors and also of the conduct of Officers in terms of that it is wholly regrettable situation that a room should be booked in that way what is supposed to be a community meeting not a party political broadcast.

15. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR SANDRA RHULE

Could the executive member for housing provide the records of which estates have had enforcement action and on which dates since April 2005 by Southwark's estates parking contractors?

RESPONSE

A programme of estate visits is undertaken by the estate parking enforcement contractor on a planned two weekly cycle. Each area is visited four times during this period. These visits are undertaken with the support of residents to ensure that emergency services are able to obtain unimpeded access to the estates, that abandoned vehicles are identified and that any enforcement action is taken against those vehicles that are parked without authority. In such instances the vehicles may be clamped or towed away.

In addition to the two weekly cycle of visits exercises are undertaken to "blitz" those estates where particular problems are identified.

Since April 2005, 7983 vehicles have been clamped, 3950 vehicles have been towed away and 276 vehicles have been removed as abandoned. A full schedule is available of each estate but cannot be reproduced as part of this response because of the size of the document. If members wish the full detailed information I am happy to ask officers to forward this to them.

16. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Will the executive member for housing management consider implementing a support scheme for tenants and leaseholders from vulnerable groups who are unable to use lifts on their estates due to persistent technical failures to help with everyday tasks like carrying their shopping upstairs?

RESPONSE

There are currently no arrangements in place to provide practical assistance to households in the event of a disruption to lift services. However, the council recognise the lift service needs to improve and is undertaking a review of all the maintenance arrangements for lifts. Additionally, a procurement exercise will shortly commence to improve the contractor element of the maintenance arrangements in the future. Ways of supporting vulnerable tenants will be considered alongside proposals for new maintenance arrangements.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Thank you Mr Mayor – thank you to the Executive member for his answer. I am very pleased to see that ways of supporting vulnerable tenants will be considered along with these arrangements but I see they are shortly to commence but probably more pressingly is when does the executive member expect them to conclude and so I can go back to estates like the Osprey in my ward and tell them we are going to get them some of the support they need and deserve?

RESPONSE - COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

I am very grateful to Councillor Noblet for his supplementary question. It was my intention that we will include this in the view that we are currently carrying out in terms of service delivery improvements and that process will be going on over the next 3 months.

17. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Can the executive member for housing please detail the number of missed appointments made by contractors which have been reported to the housing department, by ward, since January 1 2006?

RESPONSE

A total of 146 appointments have been reported as missed to the housing department since 1st January 2006. However, it is recognised that this reported number of missed appointments is unlikely to portray the reality so an improved system of reporting has been introduced this month.

The council clearly recognise that improvements need to be made to ensure that not only are appointments made at the convenience of the customer but also that appointments are made at the first point of contact.

The council will launch a new, more effective, appointment system for repairs in the first quarter of 2007. This will enable customers to arrange a suitable appointment at the point the repair is ordered through the customer service centre. This will allow more accurate, timely and detailed recording of repairs appointments and will not only improve the customer experience but also give the council the opportunity to learn the lessons of where we have service failure and develop a solution for those service failures.

The introduction of the repairs appointing service has been benchmarked against the most advanced housing repairs services across the UK and is proven to deliver greater customer satisfaction and to improve resource management. The advanced appointment system will deliver repairs appointments in defined timescales depending upon the type of repair to be undertaken. The delivery of further phases of the repairs appointments, with the target of a zero failure rate, will be introduced incrementally throughout 2007, but are anticipated to extend to all repairs appointments including heating contractors.

A range of other service improvements are also being introduced to ensure appointments, even under the improved appointment system are not missed.

18. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON

Can the deputy leader give me the ratio for the number of people who are paid to report on repairs against the number of people actually doing repairs?

RESPONSE

In the context of an end-to-end process for delivering the current repairs service there is approximately a ratio of 3 people involved in raising the works order to 4 people actually delivering the service direct. This ratio includes all aspects of the service from the customer service centre, Southwark technical service and area office staff.

It is clear that there is a need to review current processes to ensure responsive repairs are just that and not driven by lengthy processes that do not deliver for the customer.

New initiatives to improve the repairs service (appointments at first point of contact, increasing the access to the repairs service through the web and improving the diagnosis of repairs at the point of first reporting) are already planned to ensure that process lengths are shortened and that the council's repairs service becomes truly customer focused.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON

I would like to thank the executive member for his answer and I am very glad that the administration is now fixing this appalling situation and would be grateful if you could give me an indication of the timing of the changes that he has mentioned. I would also like to ask how we ever got to a process which was so long winded and drawn out and where so many people are involved in raising works orders. Was it as I suspect something that grew out of 40 years of Labour mismanagement of the borough?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR KIM HUMPHREYS

I am very grateful to Councillor Salmon for her very perceptive supplemental question and I would like to make a couple of comments just in response to that. It is quite clear that we need to look in terms of the repairs and maintenance contract, in terms of the repairs service that we deploy the staff within that in an effective manner that actually provides value for residents and we do not have too many people sitting in the offices and we have more people out on the estates. That is what I have been told time and time again when I have gone to CTRAs across this borough to hear what they wanted to see in terms of service improvement. That's what we are going to be looking at in terms of emphasising that making sure that we get people out onto the estates and actually going and inspecting the quality of the work that has been done by contractors. The second thing I want to comment on is that we will be introducing a brand new appointment system that will be coming in place I hope in February of next year. In terms of that that will allow residents to make an appointment at a time that is convenient for them, that will mean for example that mothers will not have to stay in and not have problems in terms for example of taking the children to school in terms of their very thorough working lives. We are going to bringing through the

actual changes that unfortunately under 40 years of a labour council they were never delivered.

19. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR KIRSTY MCNEILL

The executive member for housing attended a 'crisis meeting' with the tenant and resident's association (TRA) of the Four Squares estate at which he promised a task force of senior officers to co-ordinate all the work that is being done on the estate on various issues, to include Councillor Jeff Hook, police, housing, Southwark anti-social behaviour unit (SASBU), and Four Squares representatives. Could he update me when the first meeting was held, who was involved and how regularly the meetings will take place from now on?

RESPONSE

The first meeting of the task force, led by the deputy leader and executive member for housing management, was held on September 5 2006. Senior officers from the metropolitan police, warden service, housing management and SASBU were present. A project group made up of residents was set up as a result to look at housing maintenance, housing repairs and issues of anti social behaviour on the estate.

A letter was sent in September 2006 to all residents of the estate seeking volunteers from each of the blocks to be part of the project group. The volunteers would lead residents for each block to work on action plans on housing maintenance and repairs as well as some anti social behaviour issues.

The council has been working with its partners. With a range of actions have been initiated to tackle anti social behaviour. Action has included: 14 ABCs (anti social behaviour contracts) successfully agreed; 67 warning letters issued; numerous estate walkabouts/inspections, including joint patrolling by safer neighbourhood police and the community wardens as well as estate visits, including night time visits; eight alleged perpetrators have participated in and completed the Fire Brigade LiFE Scheme, and there has been a 73% reduction in arson and a 100% reduction in reported racial harassment.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR KIRSTY McNEILL

I would like to thank the executive member for his partial answer to my question but I wonder if you might finish the job and tell us if these project planning meetings are now regular and if any meeting has taken place since February.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR K HUMPHREYS

I am somewhat mystified by Councillor McNeill's understanding of the Julian Calendar, in particular we certainly met in September. There was a further meeting in November and there will be another meeting earlier on in the New Year. I am not quite sure what she was saying about a meeting in February because I certainly met since then in September and it is quite clear to me that the Four Squares is one the clear areas that needs priority in terms of housing management we are going to be putting a lot of resources, a lot of management time to making sure using the resources that we have across the council to

improve the quality of life on that estate and that is something that will be a key priority.

20. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

Will the executive member for housing confirm he is not planning to out-source Southwark's council housing stock during this administration?

RESPONSE

Unlike in Lambeth, where the incoming executive sprang an ALMO (arms length management organisation) on its tenants without any warning, Southwark council has made it clear that it will not impose a stock transfer or ALMO in relation to its housing stock. This follows lengthy consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives during which it was established that the council could achieve the government decent homes standard using internal financial resources without the need to look at alternative external funding which would have been directly linked to externalising the management of the stock.

This is of course a decision that is based on the premise that it is community led. Should at any time in the future the community wish to put forward alternative proposals the council will of course need to consider the matter further. I would like to make it very clear that any change to the current position would only be considered at the behest of the community.

21. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

Was the deputy leader aware that the decisions on changes to the housing department were interim decisions when he wrote to tenants and leaseholders informing them of these changes? If so, why did he choose not to make this clear in his letter of October 30?

RESPONSE

I am committed to keeping tenants and residents associations fully informed on changes that affect them. The decision making process in relation to the organisational structure of the council is clearly a matter for the chief executive and had no place in that letter. The organisational changes proposed by the chief executive will be reported to the executive on December 12 2006.

The most important issue is how service delivery arrangements will be taken forward and as such the letter makes it clear that the housing management and home ownership services will be managed by the strategic director of environment and leisure who will align them with the other front line services provided direct to residents. This change is essential to create the management capacity to bring about the improvements that tenants and leaseholders rightly expect over the coming months.

I anticipate that a detailed plan for service delivery improvements will be forthcoming in January 2007. To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to

influence this plan a programme of consultation has already started, which will provide the opportunity for housing users, particularly resident representatives in tenant and resident associations, area forums as well as tenant council and leaseholders council, to express their views about the service before any decisions are made about operational changes.

22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE

To ask the executive member for regeneration whether he is pleased with the standard of planning enforcement in the borough and whether he believes that people in Southwark receive a good service, given that residents in Warner Road have been living with a car pound which does not have planning permission for three years, and residents in Caspian Street are forced to live next door to a building which has been uncompleted for over a year and is now attracting problems to the area?

RESPONSE

In the past 12 months the planning enforcement service has undertaken significant improvements to service delivery. Improvements to internal systems and management processes have resulted in an increase in the number of cases being investigated and closed or, where expedient, formal enforcement action being taken.

Over the past 6 months the service has:

- Served almost three times as many notices (41) over the six month period between April and August 06 than were served during the previous 12 months (15 notices in total);
- More prosecutions than the previous year - all of which have been successful and the council has been awarded costs;
- Continued improvements to develop stronger procedures for tracking member inquiries, enforcement appeals and public complaints;
- 3 training sessions provided to members during autumn of 2006/07 regarding the procedures, options and limitations of enforcement legislation, which is helping to increase understanding and develop relationships with members.

However, I want to see more improvement and further plans are in place to develop improved liaison with members, the public and other services within the council, particularly legal services. The improvement plans also include focus on broader enforcement and compliance activity, including links to building control work, Section 106 and the conditions attached to planning permissions. We need more proactive responses (rather than reactive) and to increase member and public trust through publishing news regarding successful enforcement activity will help restore confidence in the service

I am told that in relation to the two examples cited:

Warner Street: Enforcement notices have recently been served, with planning enforcement officers working closely with the freeholders of the site in their actions to achieve a court order for their leaseholder's eviction. This has resulted in the leaseholders now having to vacate the site by March 6 2007. Compliance

with the enforcement notice is required by February 15 2007. Arrangements have already been made for the planning enforcement service to monitor the site over this period and (depending on any appeal) should the enforcement notice not be complied with, then prosecution and if necessary direct action would be pursued.

Caspian Street: Enforcement officers have sought legal opinion on what, if any, enforcement action could be taken. It is considered there has been, effectively, no breach of planning control in that works have commenced on site and the planning permission has been implemented. Members should note there is no planning condition that requires completion of the development by a certain date; and this would not be a normal course of action for a local planning authority. The option of compulsory purchase of the site by the council has been looked at, but this can take up to three years and is costly. Discussions with the owners have suggested that works will restart on site in the near future. Officers are pursuing negotiations with the owners on this point and will continue to monitor the site closely to ensure that it does not become a safety hazard.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE

Yes thank you Mr. Mayor. I would like to thank the Executive member for his answer. I am pleased by his assurances and I am sure my constituents will be as well, but why has there been such a long delay particularly on Warner Road in ward and why has it taken over 3 years for the council to actually take some action on a clear breach of planning and also on Caspian Street you are saying that discussions with the owners has suggest that work will restart in the near future. Could you be a more specific and say when that's actually going to happen because people in Caspian Street have been waiting again a long time for this building to be finished and I would like some assurances to take back to them about when this is going to happen.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR RICHARD THOMAS

Thank you for that supplementary question. The short answer on Warner Street is that things have got better in the last couple of years because a couple of years ago we took a budget decision to put in place a proper planning enforcement team and that had never existed before indeed throughout the 40 years of Labour misrule in Southwark but that has happened and that's why the service started to improve. I can't recall whether Labour backed that particular part of the budget, I am sure we can go and check but I accept things need to move on further. In relation to Caspian Street we are seeking further legal advice and I am afraid I can't help much more with the timetable because legal advice is often slower coming than you would normally like but interestingly in relation to that it appears to be the actual planning condition in the first place that is at fault because we put in a standard condition that meant that work did not have to start for 5 years before a completion notice could actually be put in. Now the question is why have we got that kind of standard notice and should we be looking at changing that, that's a very old planning permission it dates back to 2002 but I think we should be looking not at just at the enforcement but the actual condition in the first place.

23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON

Could the executive member for regeneration indicate where in the borough he advises Heygate leaseholders might be able to purchase an equivalent property for the sums the council is currently offering for their homes?

RESPONSE

The valuation by the council of a leaseholder's property represents a formal assessment of open market value based upon current market evidence. This is an exercise very heavily prescribed by a body of legislation contained in a series of Acts of Parliament from the Land Compensation Act 1961 through to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The basis of valuation that a local authority is obliged to adopt is set out in the legislation and has been further developed at common law through case-law decisions of the courts.

The council always advises leaseholders to obtain independent professional advice for which the council pays the reasonable costs. Appropriately qualified officers of the council (chartered surveyors) will inspect and value the subject premises and will consider evidence and opinion put forward by the leaseholder's professional advisors. The council's valuers have full regard to their professional obligation to ensure that the compensation offered is based upon the statutory provisions and fully reflects the measure of compensation to which the claimant is entitled. Normally a period of negotiation follows and in most cases agreement is reached.

Where terms cannot be agreed, then (subject to the formal confirmation of a CPO by the First Secretary of State) the valuation may be referred to the Lands Tribunal, which makes an independent decision on value based on the evidence presented by the two parties.

In relation to the particular issue raised in the question, it is generally the case that residential values on council estates, particularly the larger estates, are significantly below levels for more traditional owner-occupied properties. As a consequence it is difficult for leaseholders affected by demolition schemes to buy equivalent homes in the open market. Unless the leaseholder has other resources or borrowing capacity, purchases of ex-RTB properties on other estates or a move to a cheaper location are often the only realistic options.

It was recognition of this that strongly influenced the content of the Elephant and Castle leaseholder policy adopted by the council in February 2005. Copies of this report have been issued and presented to all leaseholders on the estate. The executive report setting out the policy identified that leaseholders displaced from the Heygate estate may have difficulty in meeting their housing requirements in the open market following acquisition under statutory compulsory purchase provisions. It was also recognised that the majority of leaseholders wanted to remain in owner occupation if at all possible. Accordingly the policy is so structured that the assistance offered enables, wherever possible, for the leaseholders to be re-housed in a form of owner occupation where this is affordable for them.

It is a recognised disbenefit to residential claimants that compensation is not based on the cost of obtaining a replacement property but on the value of the property being acquired. Parliament relatively recently reviewed the law on compulsory purchase (prior to the 2004 enactment) but has not changed the underlying premise that compensation follows value of the asset taken rather than cost of suitable replacement.

The only significant addition to this compensation is a loss payment of 10% that applies to the value of the property for resident leaseholders (home loss payment) with a minimum payment of £4,000 and maximum of £40,000 - i.e. if a property has a market value of £150,000 the home loss payment would be £15,000. If they are non-resident leaseholders (i.e. rent the property out) and they have owned the property for more than a year then the owner would qualify for 7.5% of the value of the property (basic loss payment). This is added to 'disturbance costs' such as legal and surveyor's fees, removal costs etc. to the final settlement.

The homes loss and basic loss percentages are set out in, respectively, the Land Compensation Act 1973 (as amended by the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act) and the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004.

Further to this, the Heygate policy arrangements do provide opportunities for retained equity and shared ownership purchases to be made by leaseholders into schemes within the regeneration area and details of this are set out in the leaseholder policy document.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON

I think this question gets to the very core of one of the fundamental problem with this so-called alliance. We have now a situation Mr. Mayor where we have leaseholders on the Heygate Estate whose valuations are substantially lower than valuations for similar properties across the Walworth Road less than 100 meters. The equivalent distance is in fact Mr. Mayor more than £150,000 so I would ask the executive member the following question.

Will he accept that the council has a duty to ensure that my constituents on the Heygate Estate are able to receive from this council full compensation for the loss of value of their properties as a result of council neglect of their estate which has resulted in the substantial difference in the valuation of those properties?

RESPONSE

No I don't accept that at all and I don't guarantee that at all. As I have sort of set out in my question all of this is very heavily prescribed by law. If you want to look at party politics then the 1961 Act was presumably passed under a Tory government, the 2004 Act under a Labour government but playing those games is not particularly helpful – is it – we followed what is set out in law and that is based on the value of the property not on the value of other properties around the area. Now it may come as a surprise to Councillor Seaton but one of the issues with the Heygate Estate is that its not actually as desirable on private housing market as some other areas around that's why the decision was taken all those years ago under a Labour council to knock down that housing estate. That's a decision that we supported then because it is necessary to improve the living conditions of people on that estate. If they don't support that decision now then I want to know why not but in meantime we will get on with doing the job – we will do it within the Law because that's the way responsible public authority should do and I would appreciate a bit support but if they are not going to have any support we will get on with the job ourselves.

24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD

Noting the executive member's response to both question 17 and the supplemental question at the last assembly meeting that his department has spent only £2.5m of section 106 money since 2002, but has nearly £9m in currently available section 106 balances and a future promise of a further £17m or more;

Could he list, by council ward:

- (a) The total expenditure of the regeneration department;
- (b) How much section 106 money has been transferred to spending on borough-wide objectives and initiatives;
- (c) How much section 106 money has reverted to the council's central funds as unspent section 106 money since May 2002?

RESPONSE

- (a) The overall expenditure of the regeneration department cannot readily be allocated to individual wards. Many of the programmes and activities are operated borough wide.
- (b) No Section 106 money has been "transferred" to borough wide initiatives. The money is spent in accordance with the individual agreements. In many cases this will be on projects or activities relatively near to the development contributing the resources. Under a number of agreements there is provision for contributions to economic development and training support which can be used as part of other programmes to help residents across a wider area.

The proposed supplementary planning document on Section 106 sets out a number of ways in which resources might contribute to pooled funding (for example, on schools). Projects supported by such pooled funding could eventually be of benefit to wider areas.

- (c) All Section 106 money that has been paid to the council but remains uncommitted is held in a 'planning gain' account with individual account records for each Section 106. It does not therefore revert to the council's central funds. Where the purposes of the original agreement cannot be implemented there may be other provision in individual agreements as to how such funds can be used.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD

Thank you Mr Mayor speaking as a Labour Member for less than 40 years on the council I would just like to thank my good colleague, Councillor Thomas for his reply. What I would like to do is to just further that in noting his remarks particularly in paragraph (b) and in particular the last sentence about pooled funding what I would like him to do if he could, I would be grateful if he could is to give an assurance that you could possible draw up a paper to circulate to all members on how a proportion of the £9m which are in current balances under Section 106 funding can be used to the benefit of wider areas as it stipulates in that sentence.

RESPONSE

I saw the faces on Councillor Wingfield's colleagues when he did not categorically fail to rule out that he was not aiming for hanging around for 40 years. But anyway, I think this is very important – what I would like to do is look at this and get the information out to the community council because I recognise that there is a lot of local knowledge which will help in form whether some of those 106 agreements can be spent in the way it originally envisage and where they cannot and I think that's sort of community council knowledge would be very helpful and its just one of the reasons why community councils are a good thing.

25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

Can the executive member for education and children's services outline the current situation in the development of a boy's school in East Dulwich?

RESPONSE

Work is progressing to achieve the permanent opening of the Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich in September 2009. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) decided, in consultation with the sponsor, that it would not be possible to open the school earlier in temporary buildings on any of the sites available. We are continuing our negotiations with the DfES and the sponsor around arrangements for the temporary opening of the school in September 2008.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, I would like to thank the executive member for education and children's services for her excellent response about the work to achieve an early opening of a boys school in East Dulwich and I do have supplementary question for her and it is this, can the executive member for education children's services be confident in the light of the broken promises and the lack of commitment of the Prime Minister and the Member of Parliament for Dulwich and West Norwood that the secondary school for boys in East Dulwich would be provided by September 2007 and upon the evidence of the shameful way in which the announcement about it was made that they will in the near future be a place where at least 180 local boys in East Dulwich can go to a secondary school and the interests, hopes and ambitions of pupils and parents have not been sacrificed upon the altar of cash flow and treasury expediency.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON

Thank you very much for your supplementary question. I think it is a very important issue and I can fill my 15 minutes if you want talking on this particular issue. Seriously it is a really, really important issues. Pledges were made by the government, by Lord Adonis, by Tessa Jowell and by the council that we would open a school in September 2007 in temporary accommodation for boys and what then happened which many of you will know, many of you won't know is that we are working looking for a temporary site and what then happened was we identified the temporary site and everything was going along nicely and as the project meeting went ahead we heard rumours all week whilst meeting that were making the decision on whether to go ahead on this site was in progress the

leader gets a call from Lord Adonis saying sorry mate its all off we are not going to that site so before the board has actually made a decision the government had already decided and I think its absolutely shocking as my colleagues has said and its absolutely disgraceful way to behave the issue now is that we are working very hard I met with the sponsor last week and expressed how disappointed we were that they had not been able to find a site for 2007 and we are working hard to try and identify one for 2008 opening. We also met with Lord Adonis last week and made it very clear indeed that we wanted it to go ahead and we got a guarantee that the money for temporary accommodation £2m was still there to be spent in finding a site and building a temporary school for that year so we are keeping on working. What I am concerned about whilst we look for other sites I am concerned that there had been suggestions that we could use our metropolitan open land for a year. Suggestions that we could use park land for a year for the temporary school and I think that is a concern its certainly something that I have support from the community for when the two labour MPs are making suggestions along that line I think we need to look at that very carefully indeed.

26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION FROM COUNCILLOR BOB SKELLY

Will the executive member for education and children services make a statement on the success of environmental initiatives for both primary and secondary schools in Southwark?

RESPONSE

Southwark Council has a firm commitment to promoting environmental awareness and sustainability in schools and we are pleased at the level of involvement by both primary and secondary phase schools in this type of work. There are two programmes that provide support for schools to address environmental issues: the international eco-schools programme and the London Schools Environment Award (LSEA). Activities are co-ordinated and delivered by the street improvement team (environment and leisure) to all schools throughout the borough. 19 schools are registered as eco-schools and 45 are registered for this year's LSEA.

The eco-schools programme is for primary and secondary schools and provides a simple framework to challenge attitudes and behaviours towards the environment whilst embedding an understanding of sustainable development within the whole school community.

Schools work towards a bronze or silver award or towards a green flag. Southwark currently has 19 schools that have registered for the eco-school programme.

The London Schools Environment Award (LSEA) scheme rewards schools for environmental projects. The challenge is designed to complement and build on environmental projects that the schools are already carrying out, such as the blue box paper recycling scheme. Southwark is the only borough in London to have expanded it to include secondary schools.

Awards of £2,000 and £1,000 are presented annually to two primary schools and to two secondary schools in Southwark that take part in the award. Southwark

currently has 45 schools registered on this year's LSEA scheme, the highest number in London.

Activities are delivered and assistance provided to all schools participating in both schemes. This includes a spaceship assembly, waste audits, visits to the depot, signposting to resources, ecological foot printing, one to one guidance, INSET sessions and staff training, and advice on curriculum links. The street improvement team also hosts an annual environmental celebration event for all schools in the borough acknowledging the commitment and dedication shown by all those involved. Environmental Oscars are presented for best newcomer, most innovative school, and excellence in environmental awareness and outstanding commitment. This year awards were presented to City of London Academy, Surrey Square Infants School, St Anthony's RC primary, and Kate Newby also from St Anthony's.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR BOB SKELLY

I would like to thank the Executive member for her answer. I see that 19 schools have signed up as eco-schools and I wonder if you could give us an update on how that's going and what success they have had

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR C PIDGEON

Thank you very much Councillor Skelly for your supplemental. Out of the 19 schools who have registered with eco-schools programme we have had 5 achieved bronze which is like 3rd level, 2 are silver and what I am really pleased to announce as not many members will know is that in November Charles Dickens Primary has successfully achieved the green flag status and this is the first school in the borough to get that which is the top status in terms of eco-school programme and there is only one of very few schools in inner London who have actually achieved this and what it actually involves apart from having an action team and working and making sure the environment is at the heart of every school is that it has brought it very clearly into the curriculum so, for example, in years 3 and 4 the numeracy data they have looked at handling figures relating to water use, heat loss and recycling and using bar charts and pie graphs from that in terms of literacy looking at rules for working on the school growing area and science of investigating different conditions plants need to grow so really making sure that the environment is at the heart of what they do and they also of course have a very big project which I am sure you are familiar with. They have a green house which was erected and a growing area has been developed and they have an after school club once a week with Waterloo Green Trust and they use vegetables that have been harvested and they use in their school lunch which are of the highest quality and a real model and one of their staff are actually helping our school meals groups in terms of that healthy eating so they have been doing a huge amount of work with its energy and water saving campaigns studying the rain forest and the importance throughout literacy and science and I think it's a real model for all our schools and I look forward to celebrating with them next week and I also look forward to many more schools becoming green flag eco-schools in the future.

27. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD

What reassurances can the executive member give to parents with children in bands 5-7 of special educational needs on proposals to decouple special education needs (SEN) funding from statements? Will the executive member give a commitment that parents and teachers will be properly consulted on this issue, and that their views will have a real effect on the drafting of any final policy?

RESPONSE

The council's inclusion strategy (2005 – 2008) was agreed by the executive at their meeting on November 22 2005 and further considered by the education scrutiny sub-committee at their meeting on November 30 2005. Both these bodies welcomed the strategy and agreed the four priority areas and subsequent actions.

A key action was the need to improve the impact of funding for vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEN. This section of the strategy reported on initial work already undertaken and outlined further actions. A sub-group of the schools forum, the SEN funding review group, has undertaken this work, resulting in the "funding for inclusion" consultation paper.

The proposal is that the funding currently allocated for children at school action plus and for children with statements supported at bands 5 to 7 will be combined into a single fund that will be allocated by formula to schools in their annual budget. This will mean that the schools will already have funding in their budgets for the most commonly identified ("high incidence") special educational needs. There are considerable advantages to the proposals and these are set out in detail in the consultation document. These include enabling earlier identification and provision for pupils with SEN and the freeing up of professional time to provide more direct support to children. However, we do understand the concerns expressed by some parents and give the following reassurances:

- 1) The local authority will continue to maintain an existing statement for any pupil including those at bands 5 to 7.
- 2) A parent of a pupil with a statement (including bands 5 to 7) will have exactly the same statutory rights as they do now, including the right to appeal to tribunal.
- 3) The local authority will continue to have the same accountability and legal responsibility to ensure that the provisions contained in the statement are delivered to the child.
- 4) Most other local authorities have adopted a similar approach and experience has shown that it has been very successful. The government expects Southwark to develop such an approach and we have been working closely with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in drawing up these proposals.
- 5) The proposals will maintain the overall funding allocated to schools for special educational needs: there will be no cut in this existing budget. It is envisaged that in the medium to long term there will be advantages to pupils as school-based staff and other professionals will be able to reduce the amount of time spent on the administration of statements and can give more time and expertise in direct support of pupils.
- 6) The local authority is aware of the concerns of some parents that if further funding is delegated to schools in this way that the schools will not spend this money effectively on pupils with SEN. We are therefore planning to improve

our framework for monitoring and accountability. Parents will have an opportunity to be involved in this planning.

- 7) We will draw up and publish guidelines for schools on meeting special educational needs and ensure that training is available.
- 8) If the proposals are agreed then the implementation will be reviewed by the SEN funding review group so that the impact can be evaluated and the process refined accordingly.

Feedback from schools and parents has clearly indicated a need to improve the present system. We believe that the new proposals will bring clear benefits to pupils with learning difficulties in Southwark and will be a more equitable way of distributing funding. However, we do understand the anxieties of some parents and we are listening carefully to their concerns. Many of the most strongly expressed views from parents have been from those who have experienced difficulties under the present system. They are understandably concerned to ensure that any new system will bring significant improvements.

The views and questions received from schools and parents have been extremely informative and helpful to us and will play an important part in shaping the final proposals. All responses have been recorded and will be reflected in the report to the schools forum.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD

Thank you; thank you very much to the executive member for her response. Given the sensitivity of this issue and the high level of protest there have been from parents and some schools the school in South Camberwell has actually set up a petition about does the Executive member not think that the consultation period which was just very few weeks I think it was 4 weeks October to the end of November is just too short a time to make a decision for budgeting in time for April and are you going to review that kind of timetable?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON

Thank you very much for your supplemental question. It is a very important issue. Whilst I understand what you are saying on this final bit of the consultation process actually there has been a very long process of consultation because work began on the inclusion of the SEN strategy back in 2004 I think it was before you was shadowing on the subject area and consultation is taking place throughout the process of developing that strategy and the delegation of SEN funding was the key element within that strategy and first of all it was agreed in principle by head teachers and governors forums, it was introduced to the parents' council – the recent consultation has been a month or so and I appreciate that may seem that short but it has been something that has been ongoing since 2004 but I would say in 2005 November it was not only agreed by executive but fully supported by Scrutiny who express approval and wanted to look forward to seeing this new model of funding which he is very keen to receive back. Now in terms of issues I appreciate there is a school in South Camberwell who has been raising the petition and about 100 parents have attended meetings and what has come out is that some the parents actually feel very concerned about the service about the service they have been getting for their special education needs as it is at the moment so I think some of those issues have not just related to funding but the decision goes to the Sub-Committee Schools Forum and they will look at the consultation responses and make a

recommendation from there which will then go the schools forum and then I will receive a report after that and we will look at where we are then.

28. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES

Were Southwark executive members or council officers invited to the meeting at which the decision was taken not to proceed with the Bredinghurst temporary school site? What proportion, if any, of the meeting did both Southwark officers and executive members attending comprise?

RESPONSE

The project group for the Harris academies in East Dulwich does not include an executive member. The local authority has one place out of the ten making up the board. An officer of the council has attended the group on a regular basis to facilitate the smooth transition of Waverley Girls' school and the planning for the boys' school. A meeting took place on Friday October 13 to discuss the feasibility of the opening of the boys' academy in temporary accommodation on the Bredinghurst site. However, in the days that preceded the meeting information was given to officers of the council, from within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), that the decision not to proceed had already been taken. This was confirmed on the morning of the meeting in a telephone call to the officer concerned. It was clear that the meeting was to be used to rubber stamp a decision made elsewhere. As the council did not agree with that decision and how it had been made the officer stated these points and left the meeting. To have stayed would have made the council complicit in the decision and the process.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES

Could I ask Councillor Pidgeon and I will ask it in the most pleasant tone possible because I am on my third meeting and I am getting a bit better at this. Can I ask her if she enjoys reading Councillor Thomas' blog and did she particularly reading the bit in the blog where he announced that Breddington was actually to become the temporary site: I enjoyed reading that. Councillor Thomas writes very well. He is my second favourite Liberal Democrat blog writer.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON

I certainly do enjoy reading Councillor Thomas' blog as well as other Members in this Chamber. Bredinghurst it is rather than Breddington and obviously I was in discussion with Councillor Thomas on any education matters before something is posted on the blog. But I obviously was aware of that and I am very disappointed in terms of the decision that was made over Bredinghurst because I think that could be made a suitable temporary accommodation site but we are where we are and we are working forward on that.

29. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

Did officers give advice to executive members as to the suitability of the Bredinghurst site for the Harris Boys Academy in East Dulwich? If so, did officers

recommend proceeding with the temporary school on that site or not? What information was used to inform that advice?

RESPONSE

Officers provided advice to executive members and to the project board on the risk assessment carried out in relation to the possible use of the Bredinghurst site for the temporary boys' school. The view from officers was that although there would be risks, in a number of areas these were being exaggerated and that others related to Bredinghurst school and not to the proposed boys' school. Officers received the risk matrix on Tuesday October 10 prior to the meeting on the October 13. Proposals for mitigation, including the offer of substantial additional resources were put forward. However, these did not appear in the matrix presented to the meeting on the October 13. The report accompanying the matrix was tabled on the October 13. Officers were therefore unable to comment on the decision taken by the DfES prior to the meeting.

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

When utility companies (for example, EDF Energy and Thames Water) carry out works which require their contractors to excavate and then relay Southwark roads and pavements, what action is taken against the utility company or their contractor if works are not to an acceptable standard, and can she publish information (last known year) on how many occasions we have required works to be redone and whether prosecutions have had to be pursued?

RESPONSE

The council requires utility companies who undertake work on the borough's road network to do so in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and associated codes of practice.

In effect this means that utility companies are required to notify the council when they intend to carry out works and to reinstate any excavation with materials suitable for the type of road and when re-surfacing to use materials that match those of the area immediately surrounding the works.

In many cases an initial temporary repair is carried out followed by a permanent repair up to six months later once any ground settlement has finished. The council receives over 35,000 such notifications every year. 30% of these works are inspected either when the works are in progress (10%), within 6 months of completion (10%) or within 2 years of completion (10%) and the costs of these inspections are recovered from fees charged to the utility companies. In addition the council responds to any complaints made from the public within three working days.

Should a reinstatement be found to be defective in either quality or workmanship the utility company is asked by the council to attend a joint inspection at which improvements are agreed. Works are then re-inspected to check they are completed to the council's satisfaction.

The council does have powers to both undertake the works and recharge the cost to the utility company and to prosecute however this has not proved necessary in

recent years as all remedial works requested by the council has been undertaken satisfactorily.

In addition the council has, in recent months, been successful in getting utility companies to undertake a wider scale of re-instatement than that required by law; one that also takes into account the longer term defects in the highway, for example where Thames Water have been replacing Victorian ring mains in Peckham they have also been re-laying the road to the centre line rather than solely to the area of their works.

Data is not kept on the number of times remedial works have been requested however, all remedial works required by the council have been undertaken. We do not maintain a data system on inspection outcomes as the cost of administration could not be met from the fees charged to the utilities.

SUPPLEMENTAL - COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

I thank the executive for my question. If was ever there was a candidate for naming and shaming in the borough I think its probably some of the utility companies. I am delighted to see the work that you are doing on this and I hope that you might consider giving some publicity to enforcement against utility companies in the future. In the meantime I wondered if perhaps you could pick up a particular case in my ward where there has been some emergency gas works ongoing for the past 4 weeks and if you could perhaps get your enforcement officers to have a look at that particular case as well.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

I would like to thank the councillor for his question. As I have said in my remarks the council does require utility companies to do so in accordance with the 1991 Act. If he is aware of a specific instance where the utility company has not done this I am very happy to take up and will report it to enforcement officers tomorrow and ensure that that is pursued.

31. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR MICHELLE HOLFORD

Can the executive member confirm whether the new lamp posts that have appeared in the Bellenden area have been funded from the capital budget being used to replace potentially dangerous concrete lamp posts and why monies needed to be spent on replacing working, adequate e metal lamp posts?

RESPONSE

I can confirm that the new lighting columns in the Bellenden renewal area were not funded from the capital budget for the replacement of potentially dangerous concrete columns. The new lighting was funded as part of the agreed programme of works for the Bellenden renewal area. I can also confirm that all the lighting columns, which were changed as part of these improvements, were considered by the street scene and metalwork section as being below acceptable levels in relation to their structure and the quality of the lighting being provided.

As a result of the use of renewal area resources for this work, the existing resources in relation to the replacement of potentially dangerous columns can be spent in other areas of the borough.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR MICHELLE HOLFORD

Thank you Mr Mayor – I would like to thank the executive member for her answer to my question. Could I please ask her to let me know the order of priority for spending the reallocated money that is there for the replacement of potentially dangerous concrete lamppost columns in the rest of the borough?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR RICHARD THOMAS

It is a bit of overlap here on the old portfolio's responsibilities because I actually wrote this answer although thinking about it that question is more sensible directed at Councillor Rajan but I happen to know that we have allocated money in the budget report which went through executive a couple of weeks ago and I spoke to Des Waters the other day who said he would be bringing forward a programme to set out exactly that in the New Year.

32. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BAICHO

What assessment has the executive member for environment made of the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act on the provision of waste collection and recycling services in the borough?

RESPONSE

A variety of waste collection schemes exist in Southwark and it is recognised that some residents, especially the elderly, infirm or disabled may experience problems in presenting their waste or recycling for collection. Part 3 (s19), of the Disability Discrimination Act (discrimination in relation to goods, facilities and services), states the following: -

- (1) It is unlawful for a provider of services to discriminate against a disabled person —
- (a) in refusing to provide, or deliberately not providing, to the disabled person any service which he provides, or is prepared to provide, to members of the public;
 - (b) in failing to comply with any duty imposed on him by section 21 in circumstances in which the effect of that failure is to make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for the disabled person to make use of any such service;
 - (c) in the standard of service which he provides to the disabled person or the manner in which he provides it to him; or
 - (d) in the terms on which he provides a service to the disabled person.

Therefore, the refuse and recycling collection services offer an 'assisted collection service' for residents who may experience difficulties. For example, if a resident is required to place their refuse or recycling bin or bags out for collection, but a physical problem prevents them from doing so, we will collect the waste from where it is stored.

33. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DANNY McCARTHY

Will the executive member lobby for the right for people with disabilities to use the freedom pass on the railway?

RESPONSE

The freedom pass is not valid for travel on train services operated by Gatwick express, GNER, Midland mainline, Virgin trains and Heathrow express, or on Heathrow connect between Hayes & Harlington and Heathrow. For travel beyond the freedom pass area a separate extension ticket must be bought before travel. Holders of senior and disabled persons railcards may be able to obtain a discount on the price of extension tickets. For travel within the London area the freedom pass is valid for all services that stop in Southwark. The specific stations between which the freedom pass can be used are detailed on the freedom pass website <http://www.freedompass.org/travelareas.htm>.

Given that reimbursement for freedom pass usage comes out of the adult social services budget, it is for the executive member for health and social care to consider the costs and other implications for Southwark of lobbying for an extension of the freedom pass.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR DANNY McCARTHY

Thanks Mr Mayor. Can I thank the executive member for the answer and can I ask - now this is the problem you see – I now have a problem because there is someone else. Now – I mean, if I have a question on Housing do I ask it of Denise and Lisa and he loses his portfolio? For Health and Social Care - as I have been advised that's the right place to ask - be considering the costs and implications for Southwark and will Southwark be lobbying for extensions of the freedom pass and can I say to Councillor Stanton please don't post mine I will take it before I go.

RESPOND – COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

I would like to thank Councillor McCarthy for his supplemental. Obviously I take on board what he says and a Freedom Pass is very, very important to for older people to use transport and I do agree that it should be extended as far as the trains. However, the problem is of course that the social services budget is already overstretched and we have got a lot of savings to actually look at this year. In addition to that the top slicing of Southwark PCTs budget is going to have a knock on effect on our budget in social services as it is elsewhere in the country so obviously I am taking on board what he is asking and will certainly look at that but I can't make any promises tonight in view of the fact that we have so many pressures on that social care budget and savings to find this year.

34. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Has the executive member for environment considered changing existing controlled parking zone charging rules to a system based on vehicle emissions?

RESPONSE

In the most recently introduced controlled parking zones (CPZs) residents can receive permits discounted by 75% if they choose to drive an alternative fuel vehicle or a motorbike. These permits are available for vehicles converted to liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and electric and hybrid powered vehicles.

We currently have nineteen CPZs. Ten of these already allow a discount for environmentally friendly vehicles and motorbikes. Six CPZs are under review and will therefore be able to offer the discount facility within six months. We hope to offer discounts in the remaining three zones in a little over a year.

Officers have already been in touch with the London Borough of Richmond regarding their proposals for differential charging for permits based upon vehicle CO2 emissions, and the emerging parking enforcement plan (PEP) will consider whether such a scheme is practically feasible and economically suitable in Southwark.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Thank you Mr Mayor. Can I thank the executive member for her response and can I ask if she will join with me in congratulating Liberal Democrat Richmond-upon-Thames council in leading the way on this issue and also noting the Government Minister regret that he was not a Labour Council who did not initiate this initiative and also note that Kensington and Chelsea and Lambeth are intending to look into the proposals as well and will she also follow up on our officers looking at the feasibility of it for Southwark.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to join Councillor Noakes in congratulating Richmond on what they have done. I think it's a very brave and a very commendable initiative that they have taken on board. I just would like to point out that Richmond does have very different demographics to Southwark and if we were to carry out a similar kind of policy in Southwark it would have quite a different financial impact on our residents although I am very supportive of incentivising low emission vehicles. There are other factors that need to be taken into account in Southwark's situation and I would like to make sure that all these parameters are looked into so yes I am definitely supportive of tasking our Officers to have a look at this kind of scheme and see what we can do.

35. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

Could the executive member for environment provide me with the reasoning for siting traffic violation cameras at locations where there are already cameras?

RESPONSE

No additional cameras have been sited to undertake enforcement of moving traffic violations. All locations currently being monitored made use of the existing CCTV camera infrastructure. The council advised all ward members in the areas affected of the intention to commence monitoring of these locations, which were selected as appropriate for monitoring traffic offences based on the following criteria:

- Site accident data
- Complaints received from Members and the Public
- Street surveys
- Safety
- Congestion reduction issues.

36. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MCGOVERN

To ask the executive member for environment what action she is taking to monitor and tackle the lack of recycling facilities available for residents on estates?

RESPONSE

Over the past three years, a network of more than 251 mini-recycling centres have been sited on council housing estates, giving all residents the opportunity to recycle at a relatively convenient site. However, in order to attempt to match the level of service given to residents in street based properties, a door-to-door recycling scheme has been devised and implemented, in many high-rise and medium-rise properties.

Households on participating council housing estates are provided with a clear bag that can be filled with glass bottles and jars, paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles. These bags are collected from residents' doorsteps every week and a new bag provided to participating households. Bags are delivered once a month to all households on the scheme with the aim of engaging those not participating. This doorstep weekly clear-bag recycling scheme has grown from covering an initial 10,000 council housing estate properties to now covering 31,000 properties. The yield from the clear bag scheme has doubled from 103 tonnes in May to 207 tonnes in November and the set out rate is currently 42%. We continue to liaise with area housing managers and forums to expand both the number of bring sites and the clear bag scheme.

The scheme has been recognised as innovative and was a finalist in the prestigious national LARAC (Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee) awards in the category of Best Local Authority Initiative in November of this year.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR ALISON McGOVERN

I would like to thank the executive member for her answer which is fine as it goes which what you can say for Southwark's recycling services on estates. Not once but twice in the past week has somebody who does not live in a street property type address explained to me that they asked the council if they could recycle and they were told no they could not. So I would like to ask a supplementary to that answer. When will that situation end and will the Council focus on basis service delivery and not going after gongs

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

I think the council has made some very laudable efforts with recycling, not just with our doorstep collection but with the work that we are trying to do to make sure that we do collect recycling from estates – we have tried to get near

collections on most of our council estates but obviously people would like to be able to put their recycling out and have it collected from their door and where that's been possible and that's been in 31,000 council estate properties – this is high rise and medium rise blocks. We have achieved that with the clear bags scheme and I do accept that there are still council properties and estates properties and indeed private blocks as well that currently don't have a door-to-door collection – this is in some cases because it is not always possible to do it – it is not easy to do it but we are looking at ways of further increasing the amount of recycling collection we do and I think our scheme do deserve commendation because we have managed to increase the amount of recycling bits collected in this borough quite considerably from a very low base 4 years ago and we intend to increase it quite substantially than that.

37. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DOMINIC THORNCROFT

To ask the executive member for environment what action she is taking to reduce the overall current carbon footprint of London Borough of Southwark?

RESPONSE

Southwark is committed to reducing its carbon dioxide emissions. The executive will be considering setting a reduction target of 80% by 2050 at its meeting next week. To achieve this, Southwark is in the process of adopting a climate change strategy, which outlines our current carbon emissions situation and focuses where we can have most impact on emission reduction. The strategy addresses our energy, transport, business and housing needs and shows how we can seek to achieve challenging targets by working together with our partners and communities. The executive on December 12 will consider the strategy including a recommendation to set a reduction target of 80% by 2050, which outstrips the government's 60% target and is far more in line with the recommendations of the Tyndall centre who confirm that a reduction of 80-90% is necessary to avert catastrophic climate change.

In Southwark, the majority of CO2 emissions are from housing, and as one of the largest social landlords in the UK we can directly influence these. The major regeneration projects that will redevelop substantial areas of the borough will be built to the highest environmental building standards. The intention is to ensure there is no net gain in carbon emissions, despite an increase in population, commercial and residential floor space, and amenities. Part of the climate change strategy also involves setting up the 'sustainability forum', a cross-departmental team of officers to coordinate initiatives and drive delivery of the strategy across all council departments.

We have made good progress against our HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) targets of a 30% improvement in energy efficiency of housing stock, and secured external funding and grants for solar water heating, and packages to help customers find energy saving measures. We have secured £1.7m of EU "concerto" funding to install CHP systems fuelled with bio-fuel, along with solar and wind installations, and have worked closely with the GLA in the development of the Mayor's energy strategy.

The Southwark plan (formerly UDP) ensures that major developments meet at least 10% of energy demands via renewable sources and carry out assessments of energy demands and minimisation work. Where the council's own land forms

part of a regeneration scheme, developers are required to comply with the building research establishment “eco-homes” rating of at least “very good” or “excellent”. We are increasingly pushing developers towards carbon neutral developments.

We are working with the building schools for the future programme to ensure that these developments comply with or exceed these standards, and are engaging all schools throughout the borough through our eco-schools programme which covers climate changes and the wider sustainability agenda.

We have produced a waste minimisation strategy for the borough, and the re-development of the Old Kent Road site for a new waste treatment facility will allow us to recycle nearly 100% of the boroughs waste, and even with our existing provisions recycling has quadrupled to over 18%. The executive recently approved a green travel plan for the council that encourages use of public transport, removed financial incentives for car drivers and introduced rewards for those using more sustainable forms of transport. We have also won an award for our fleet services, the majority of which are dual fuel or bio-diesel vehicles.

Although there is much still to be done through working with residents, homeowners and businesses in the borough, the adoption of the climate change strategy, which will include signing up to the Nottingham declaration will clearly show our commitment to reducing the borough's carbon footprint and making Southwark a responsible and sustainable borough.

38. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

Can the executive member please give an update on the current progress of the Walworth Road project?

RESPONSE

The Walworth Road project is an innovative project aimed at reducing accidents and improving the public space in the Walworth Road. The council has carried out extensive consultation on the proposals and has been ready to deliver the scheme for some months; however, the delays have been due to getting the final responses from Transport for London Network assurance team in relation to traffic modelling and signal design. The council has written to TfL asking that the matter be given more urgency, as we are keen to proceed. Once the final approval is received, it is hoped that the construction phase can commence in January 2007 with works being completed before the end of 2007. A full briefing on all aspects of the project will shortly be sent to all members.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

I would like to thank the executive member for the answer that has been given although it was really quite brief and foggy and my supplementary is, is it true that the hold-up is because the traffic modelling and the signal designed has either been botched up or is unacceptable to TfL?

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

No it is absolutely not true that the traffic modelling has been botched up. It is also not true that it is unacceptable to TfL. TfL have for the most part approved

all of our modelling. There is currently a shortage of signallers who are working for TfL and that's why there has been a delay to date. We are expecting a final sign off on the Walworth Road Scheme imminently within the next couple of weeks works are intending to start in January so it is not true TfL do not agree with our plans and they do not think it will be a success.

39. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

What resources are available to enforce breaches of the food safety regulations outside normal working hours?

RESPONSE

The council's food safety service is provided from The Chaplin Centre, Thurlow Street, SE17 2DG. Personal contact may be made with the service between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Telephone contact is available 24 hours, 7 days a week via the customer contact centre on 020 7525 2000 and email (food@southwark.gov.uk).

The service responds to all complaints from members of the public regarding food hygiene within three working days. All inspections are timed to visit food premises at the most appropriate time of their operation. For example an early morning food business would be visited in the morning and, similarly, one operating late at night would be visited at night. The service operates a flexible working pattern and has officers operating between 6:30 am and 8:30 pm.

A standby arrangement exists to respond to public health emergencies, such as a food poisoning outbreak or major water outage requiring the closure of catering establishments, occurring at evenings and weekends and this is accessed via the council's emergency duty officer service on 020 7525 5000.

When issues arise concerning particular premises, these are dealt with through planned inspections undertaken outside of normal working hours on an overtime basis.

SUPPLEMENTAL – COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

Can I thank the executive for her answer and can I ask whether she could investigate why one of the Officers of the Department came to the last but one Nunhead & Peckham Rye Community Council and told us that it was a 9 till 5 service not a 6.30 till 8.30 service which I am pleased to see and would she see if there is anyway of extending this to look at food safety issues after 8.30 in the evening please.

RESPONSE – COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

I would like to thank the member for his supplementary question. I think it is clear from my answer that there is capacity and there is the ability to deal with these issues out of hours where it is absolutely necessary and where it is an emergency. If you have been told that it is 9 till 5 the information I have been given by the officers who actually conduct this work is that those hours are extended but I am happy to look into it to get confirmation of what the exact hours are for you.

40. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES & COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR JELIL LADIPO

Will the executive member set out how effective community councils have been in making the borough as a whole cleaner greener & safer?

RESPONSE

All of the community councils have used their engagement, consultation and decision making powers to improve the local environment, provide well maintained parks and open spaces and reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti social behaviour

A key role for community councils is working with local communities to change the physical environment of an area through the cleaner greener safer funding stream.

The cleaner greener safer (CGS) programme is now in its fourth year. Each year £3 million is allocated to schemes through the community councils.

Since its inception in 2003/04, 322 projects have been approved by community councils. Over 200 of these projects have already been completed and approximately £5.5 million of CGS and associated match funding has been spent.

Examples of successfully delivered projects include:

- Borough and Bankside: Falmouth Road Park – Complete renewal of park including games area, playground, fencing, planting and community artwork.
- Bermondsey: Jamaica Road Piazza delivered with joint funding from housing. New street lighting, paved areas and street furniture.
- Camberwell: Caspian Street allotments, refurbishment of site used by used by two local schools and local voluntary groups.
- Dulwich: Belair Skate Park – Brand new facility for local young people.
- Nunhead and Peckham Rye: Brimington Park – Transformation of Brimington Park including refurbished sports areas and improved landscaping. Funding also provided from Peckham community council and four other regeneration agencies.
- Peckham: Bird in Bush Park – Refurbishment of the BMX track, new play equipment and planting. A local school has continues to be involved in planting on the site.
- Rotherhithe: New CCTV installation at Albion Channel.
- Walworth: Brand new play area at Elizabeth Estate created in a previously un-used area

Projects have ranged in value from £250 pounds to over £300,000 and all have involved thorough consultation, restoring or creating new areas of public realm with a particular emphasis on designing out problems adding to the feeling of well maintained and safe areas.

This year (2006-07) community councils are likely to approve roughly 150 new projects and the scheme remains very popular amongst citizens of the borough with more and more scheme being put forward for consideration each year.

In addition to changes to the physical environment community councils have also led on other projects which aim to tackle cleaner greener safer issues. For example, Camberwell community council was instrumental in addressing a 40-year street drinking problem, which had significant economic impacts and overall quality of life in town centre and open spaces.

The operation involved working with members and focused on 150 drinkers. This resulted in an 82% sustained reduction in visible numbers of street drinkers in 2005 and 2006. 22 ABC's, 6 ASBOs were served and 4 custodial sentences resulted. This approach to cleaner greener safer issues won the council the MPS London problem-solving award 2006, Runner up in national Malcolm Tilley Problem Solving award 2006 and invited to problem solving best practice in Global Goldstein Awards 2006, Wisconsin, USA.

In 2005 Bermondsey was a hotspot for recorded arson incidents, youth related anti-social behaviour and criminal damage on estates. Following a call for action from residents and the community council the following interventions were achieved: -

- a 74% Reduction in arson incidents and 51% Reduction in fires in the area compared to November 04. A prevention arson and fire education programme developed that involved 15 schools and 3,000 children.
- 73 warning letters issued to key individuals and guardians. 2 ASBOs and 21 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts were served. Those served no longer came to public attention.

It should also be noted that each community council area has seen a reduction in overall reported crimes between April – August 2006 compared to the same period in 2005. Percentage reductions for each community council areas are: -

- Bermondsey – 7% reduction
- Borough and Bankside – 7% reduction
- Camberwell – 10% reduction
- Dulwich – 12% reduction
- Nunhead & Peckham Rye – 12% reduction
- Peckham – 15% reduction
- Rotherhithe – 10.5% reduction
- Walworth - 9% reduction.

Furthermore, both the Action groups through their visual audits and community council's directly through the CGS funding stream take a path finding approach to both clearing grot spots and finding long term resolutions to what may have been perennial cleanliness problems.

41. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES & COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU

Does the executive member consider the organisation of this year's Black History Month event as good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and does he believe the organiser of the event had sufficient knowledge of the local issues and fostered sufficient involvement of the local groups in the activities?

RESPONSE

Black History Month is a partnership between the council and local community organisations. This year's celebrations were overseen by a steering group made up of local community organisations from across the borough with a significant level of knowledge of local issues and representing community groups across our diverse communities. As executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities I sit on the steering group. This group worked with the council on the council's contributions to the event that included a launch event in Peckham Square and numerous other events in libraries, museums and other venues managed by the council that involved participation by local people in a very wide range of activities.

In addition to this the council promoted and made available advice and support to local community organisations in putting on their own events and activities. Over 40 local groups ran projects and activities throughout the month.

The launch event was a success and was attended by over 1,500 people. The event featured a balance of performers with a national and international reputation, many with strong links to Southwark and the work of local community based organisations for example a wonderful performance written, choreographed and performed by local young people. AFFORD, who won the tender to manage the launch event, facilitated all of this work, and managed a successful and safe event for the local people who attended. I am pleased to be able to report that one of the activities that took place at the launch event has won an Archive Landmark Award for work with Southwark schoolchildren inspired by archive material on the history of black activism that was used in an exhibition and activities on the day.

Even though the event was a success there are always ways in which we can improve and get even more groups and individuals in our community involved. The steering group is meeting in December to begin to plan for an even better Black History Month next year. One of the steering groups criteria for success is that we continue to develop the level of involvement of community groups across Southwark and I look forward to the support of all councillors in achieving this.

42. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MACKIE SHIEK

Gun crime is a concern for the people of Southwark, especially as this is happening to young people in nightclubs. What plan has the executive member for community safety put in place to address this?

RESPONSE

Gun crime is a key priority for the council and partners. The council has a system for identifying venues that do not take proper steps to prevent weapons related violence occurring in or close to their venues. This happens through joint meetings and intelligence sharing between the council's licensing team and the police licensing team, as well as joint intelligence sharing through the Safer Southwark Partnership operations group. Where nightclubs disregard concerns raised, the council and partners take steps to tackle, or close down the premises and if necessary revoke their licence.

The identification of problem premises and joint action is co-ordinated through the multi agency "Partnership Operations Group" (POG) (a five-borough delivery group comprising of Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth, Corydon and Greenwich

and the police). The POG builds on the success of Southwark's "operation hamrow", which focuses on individuals involved in serious gang activity and "operation trident", was set up to deal with 'black on black' shootings and has been identified as best practice by the Government Office for London and the Home Office.

At the meeting held at the Ministry of Sound yesterday a draft voluntary set of standards amongst nightclubs within Southwark in order to reduce serious violent crime was discussed and this will be brought to the Safer Southwark Partnership board when agreed. The police have offered to carry out detailed security inspections of these premises to assist the club owners with making them a more secure and safe venue for the public to enjoy.

43. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY

In the light of the serious recent events in East Walworth and Camberwell, and the fact that both those wards have been identified as being in the top five worst wards for serious violent crime in London, what action has the executive member personally undertaken to tackle these problems?

RESPONSE

I was part of a delegation that recently met with Tim Godwin, Assistant Commissioner Territorial policing to express our concern with regard the level of serious crime in Southwark. We received reassurances from him that extensive resources are being committed by the MPS to deal with the situation and a number of operations are underway which should in the near future make a significant impact on events. In addition I regularly met with the Borough Commander and supported his decision to create a dedicated crime squad of forty-two officers working across the borough but focused towards the reduction of street robbery and related violence. Resources more locally controllable via the Safer Southwark Partnership are also being tasked to address the concerns of the public.

The East Walworth and Camberwell Green wards remain a key focus for police and warden deployments as specific issues arise through the weekly police crime tasking and co-ordinating group and the partnership operations group.

Safer neighbourhood teams are now well established in these localities and from December 4 2006 an additional police neighbourhood task force will operate in the north of the borough to support police operations conducted by the safer neighbourhood teams. A similar team is being established in the south of the borough in the New Year.

In addition, the council has established community warden teams in both areas/estates and they are working alongside police colleagues to tackle the issues in these areas. Each week we look at our crime patterns for the areas and make sure that the police and council place our teams at the key times on the key days in these areas.

Alongside these pro-active resources, joint council-police operations continue to focus in ensuring responsible management of licensed premises in these localities and enforcing legislation to prevent the sale and carriage of weapons.

A joint Metropolitan police service/council briefing on tackling crime in and around licensed premises is being held on Tuesday December 5 2006 at the Ministry of Sound. All relevant premise license and designated premises supervisors licence holders have been invited to attend and I myself will be in attendance.

44. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE & SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

This summer Southwark libraries held its annual reading challenge – the Reading Mission. Can the executive member give me details of the successful of the Reading Mission for each library compared to previous years? What plans are being developed to ensure that the great work that has been done on reading challenges can be built on in the future?

RESPONSE

This year's summer reading challenge was Southwark's most successful ever with a total of 2934 children participating, compared to 2358 last year. This represents a 24% increase on 2006, with all libraries either almost matching or exceeding last year's participation rate. The table below sets out the details.

LIBRARY	2005	2006	Comparison
Blue Anchor	226	394	+74%
Brandon	118	113	-4%
Camberwell	192	190	-1%
Dulwich	499	575	+15%
East Street	98	106	+8%
Grove Vale	100	136	+36%
John Harvard	183	282	+54%
Kingswood	42	80	+90%
Newington	265	335	+26%
Nunhead	149	152	+2%
Peckham	365	419	+15%
Rotherhithe	121	152	+26%
TOTAL	2358	2934	+24%

In addition to this very encouraging performance, the number of boys participating has increased from 672 in 2004, to 920 in 2005 and to 1438 in 2006, representing a 114% increase in two years. The number of girls participating has also steadily increased, but boys now account for 48.8% of participants compared to 36% in 2004.

This year's challenge was enhanced with a range of activities including reading help sessions at all libraries and author appearances, including a launch event at Dulwich Library featuring the award winning Bernard Ashley. The challenge was promoted in schools and libraries as well as at street launches on the Saturday before it commenced. These took place at:

- Tesco, Old Kent Road
- Sainsbury, Dog Kennel Hill
- Asda, Old Kent Road
- Aylesham Centre, Peckham

Butterfly Walk, Camberwell
East Street Market
Surrey Quays Shopping Centre.

The challenge is being developed at national level by The Reading Agency and Southwark is represented on the steering group. Possible developments include improved provision of sensory materials for children with disabilities, provision of dual language materials to encourage greater take up amongst families with English as a second language and extending the age group upwards from the current 4-12 age band. These developments will again enable us to increase take up of this important scheme which has been shown to help children sustain their levels of attainment over the long summer holidays.

45. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE & SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ALTHEA SMITH

To ask the Executive member if she will confirm:

- The timetable or draft timetable in place for the announcement of the investment plan for Camberwell Leisure Centre;
- That she and the strategic director for environment and leisure will attend Camberwell community council to discuss the proposal once it is announced, or by the end of February 2007 to discuss the absence of an investment plan for the centre, whichever is the sooner?

RESPONSE

How and when the council will undertake investment projects in its leisure centres will be considered by the executive as part of the capital programme and revenue budget making processes for 2007/8. The timing of these processes is set out in the forward plan.

When the executive has considered both of these matters it will be possible to clarify the investment timetable for leisure centres in the borough, including Camberwell leisure centre.

Once the investment plans for the leisure centres are agreed by the executive, the executive member and the strategic director for environment and leisure will attend the community councils concerned to discuss the proposals.

46. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR ANNE YATES

Will the executive member for health and adult care please make a statement on the likely results of the commission for social care inspection (CSCI) assessment of Southwark social services?

RESPONSE

The Commission for Social Care Improvement (CSCI) have recently announced the results of the 2005/06 star rating assessment for adult social care. Southwark retained the maximum 3 stars - for the third year running, and was one of only 13

councils, out of 150 councils nationally, to be awarded the highest rating of serving all people well, with excellent capacity for improvement.

I am sure members would like to extend our thanks to staff, our partner agencies, in particular Southwark PCT, for their continuing commitment to provide the best possible standard of care and support to the people of Southwark.

47. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON

Can executive member tell me how many showers and adaptations have been installed in individual households in response to assessed need by social services since November 2005 and at what cost? And what is the typical wait from the initial request from a resident to the work being carried out?

RESPONSE

Since November 2005, 629 adaptations including showers have been carried out at a total cost of £2,953,043. This represents an average cost per adaptation of £6,745 for major adaptations and £391 for minor jobs.

Waiting times from the receipt of client referrals by occupational therapy and the housing adaptation specification being sent to housing renewal vary depending on the category of need and the complexity of the job. For major and complex cases this is between 3 and 6 months. We continually seek to improve the efficiency of the service and to keep waiting times to a minimum via modernisation. For instance, a newly established bathing clinic addresses needs which can be met via the prescription of bathing aids for a significant number of people, thus reducing their wait and removing them from the waiting lists for more complex adaptations, like shower conversions. Administrative staff are being trained to improve the screening of new referrals, which will release unqualified occupational therapy assistants to assess more clients on the waiting list, creating a more efficient use of administrative and assistant time to reduce waits. During the period a client is waiting for a shower or other major adaptation, care packages are in place to provide additional care or support. The care package can then be reduced as appropriate once the required adaptation is completed.

Waiting times from receipt of the housing adaptation specification and completion of works by housing renewal also vary greatly depending on the complexity of the scheme. For council tenants the average wait from receipt of referral from the occupational therapists to work being completed is 4 weeks for minor works and 16 weeks for major works. This compares well with comparator authorities.

48. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

In light of concern in Southwark about the apparent accelerating loss of petrol station sites, would the chair of planning committee indicate what powers we might have, if any, to ensure an adequate number of sites are retained across the borough?

RESPONSE

There are no permitted changes to the use of a petrol station covered by the Use Classes Order 2005. This means that any change of use will require planning permission.

Southwark has not set out a policy position in the draft unitary development plan or anywhere else that would support a decision to prevent a change of use of a petrol station on the grounds of protecting the existing use. Neither is there any national planning nor London plan policy to support such a decision.

49. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

What steps are the planning department taking to encourage smaller new build developments to use sustainable energy sources and energy saving light sources and appliances, and what powers of enforcement does the council have in cases where this is included as part of a planning application?

RESPONSE

The planning department encourages smaller new build developments to use sustainable energy sources specifically through Policy 3.4 in the Southwark plan which states that all developments must be designed to maximise energy efficiency.

For smaller developments energy efficiency is mainly covered by Part L of the building regulations. This requires, for example, that 'reasonable provision shall be made for the conservation of fuel and power in buildings' by a number of means including the efficiency of light fittings and heating appliances. Developments are cross checked against the regulations by building control officers at the plan stage and inspections are carried out at various stages to ensure that all regulations are complied with. Building inspectors will only issue a completion notice once they're satisfied all regulations have been met.

Smaller developments are subject to the requirement to maximise energy efficiency but an energy assessment is not required. For smaller developments, including householder developments, improved energy efficiency will be achieved through encouragement and advice. Not necessarily through the planning process. For example, officers are preparing a guide for householders to the planning and building control requirements of installing solar panels and domestic wind turbines. This will recommend considering all of the possibilities for improving energy efficiency of buildings in conjunction with any planned use of renewable generation and direct people to sources of further information.

50. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

What plans she has to scrutinise the government's centralisation of education provision?

RESPONSE

The children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee spend a large proportion of their time scrutinising the school system in Southwark. Their investigations look at a broad range of issues and policies including Southwark's own education policies, and national education policies as applied in Southwark. For example, in this municipal year, the committee will be examining the way that the extended schools programme – a key national education policy - is being implemented at local level. The committee has a full and varied workload for this year; other topics under scrutiny include the performance of local schools, bullying in Southwark, education finance and the LEA school governor appointment process.

Looking at the 2006-07 work plan I think it is unlikely that the children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee would be able to consider further topics this year, but I'm sure they would be willing to consider any suggestions from Councillor Hook when they draw up their plans for 2007-08.

In general the best time of year to submit ideas for scrutiny topics is May, prior to the work plans being agreed for the municipal year. I have asked the head of scrutiny to send Councillor Hook a scrutiny topic proposal form and will ask her to send forms to all members in May. When submitting a proposal it is best to include as much detail as possible. It may help you to be aware that at our scrutiny away day this summer we used the following set of questions to assist in prioritising scrutiny topics.

1. Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population of Southwark?
2. Is the issue strategic and significant?
3. Will the scrutiny activity add value to the council, and/or its partners', overall performance?
4. Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?
5. Will scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?
6. Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
7. Is it an issue of community concern?
8. Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
9. Is the scrutiny activity timely

51. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR TIM McNALLY

Question withdrawn.

52. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

What plans she has to scrutinise plans to close three of the borough's police stations?

RESPONSE

Southwark Police's accommodation plans are not at present on the Scrutiny work plan, but I do appreciate that these plans have only been announced within the last couple of months.

This seems to me to be a wholly appropriate topic for a thorough scrutiny focusing on facts rather than the irresponsible scare stories currently being circulated by some unscrupulous parties. I hope that COUNCILLOR Rajan will support the amendment to motion 5 which proposes this rather than the original proposal to oppose the plans without giving full consideration to the issue.

53. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD THOMAS

What plans she has to scrutinise the performance of Metronet and other companies involved in the government's failed privatisation of the London Underground?

RESPONSE

I understand that the London Assembly Transport Committee is currently conducting a PPP review and is looking closely at the performance of Metronet. I have no plans for Southwark Council's scrutiny committees to duplicate this work. I am sure that the London Assembly Transport Committee would welcome evidence from Councillor Thomas and would encourage him to actively participate in their review. The scrutiny team would be more than happy to put him in touch with the appropriate scrutiny manager at the London Assembly.

If Councillor Thomas wishes to make any further proposals for scrutiny reviews the best time of year to submit them would be May, prior to the work plans being agreed for the next municipal year. I have asked the head of scrutiny to send Councillor Thomas a scrutiny topic proposal form and will also ask her to send forms to all members in May. When submitting a proposal it is best to include as much detail as possible. It may help you to be aware that at our scrutiny away day this summer we used the following set of questions to assist in prioritising scrutiny topics.

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7. Is it an issue of community concern?

8. Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
9. Is the scrutiny activity timely?