

<b>Item No.</b> 9.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> July 9 2008	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Council Assembly
<b>Report title:</b>		Motions	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services	

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9, the member moving the motion may make a speech directed to the matter under discussion. (This may not exceed five minutes without the consent of the Mayor).

The seconder will then be asked by the Mayor to second the motion. (This may not exceed three minutes without the consent of the Mayor).

The meeting will then open up to debate on the issue and any amendments on the motion will be dealt with.

At the end of the debate the mover of the motion may exercise a right of reply. If an amendment is carried, the mover of the amendment shall hold the right of reply to any subsequent amendments and, if no further amendments are carried, at the conclusion of the debate on the substantive motion.

The Mayor will then ask members to vote on the motion (and any amendments).

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The constitution allocates responsibility for particular functions to council assembly, including approving the budget and policy framework, and allocates to the executive responsibility for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of council services on a day-to-day basis. Therefore any matters that are reserved to the executive (i.e. housing, social services, regeneration, environment, education etc) cannot be decided upon by council assembly without prior reference to the executive. While it would be in order for council assembly to discuss an issue, consideration of any of the following should be referred to the executive:

- To change or develop a new or existing policy
- To instruct officers to implement new procedures
- To allocate resources

(Note: In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (7) & (8) (prioritisation and rotation by the political groups) the order in which motions appear in the agenda may not necessarily be the order in which they are considered at the meeting).

**1. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR KIRSTY MCNEILL** (seconded by Councillor Susan Elan Jones)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (6), council assembly shall consider this motion.

**Disabled Freedom Pass Renewal**

1. Council assembly notes that as of this year disabled Freedom passes give disabled people the right to travel on a significant proportion of the public transport network throughout the country for free. It believes that the disabled Freedom passes plays a considerable and positive role in making sure that disabled people are not cut off or isolated from society.
2. Council assembly notes the failure to process all of Southwark's disabled Freedom passes by the London-wide deadline on May 31 despite assurances to members of the community and opposition councillors that they would all be finished on time.
3. Council assembly notes the long queues of elderly, disabled and vulnerable people outside Southwark's one stop shops following the decision to process applications on a 'same-day' basis after the deadline had passed. It notes that those residents incurred a financial cost as well as going through a deeply unpleasant, uncomfortable and uncertain experience, many queuing for hours without assistance.
4. Council assembly notes that Southwark's post offices subsequently ran out of disabled Freedom passes due to the significant surge in applicants with the correct documentation from the council. It notes that this means that some residents must have been waiting for at least two weeks after the May 31 deadline, until June 16 when new passes were delivered to the post offices.
5. Council assembly believes that this sequence of events represented a critical failure by the council to fulfil its basic duty of care to some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough.
6. Council assembly notes the chief executive's formal apology issued on June 3. It further notes that the leader and executive are yet to make their own formal public apology and believes that this is symptomatic of their general failure to take responsibility for the Freedom pass renewal debacle or demonstrate any sort of political leadership over the same.
7. Council assembly calls on the executive to fully publish the findings and background documents feeding into the internal review that the chief executive referred to in her public apology.
8. Council assembly believes, however, that this failure by the council to fulfil its basic duty of care is too significant and sensitive to be handled entirely within the internal workings of the council. It further believes that while the internal review and scrutiny investigations are welcome they will not be enough to restore confidence in the council's ability to avoid a similar failure in 2010.
9. Council assembly calls on the executive to work with local community groups such as Southwark Carers and Southwark Disablement Association to establish a fully independent external review panel to investigate the sequence of events that led to this failure by the council to fulfil its basic duty of care. It believes that the external

review should also assess the effectiveness of the mode and character of the chief executive's offer of compensation.

10. Council assembly believes that the panel should include local residents who were forced to queue outside one of the one stop shops to renew their passes and that the panel should be given full, uninhibited access to relevant council documents and staff to conduct their review.
11. Council assembly believes that the panel should be fully supported to publish the findings of their review, that it should not be edited for content by council officers or members and that it should be publicly available.
12. Council assembly further calls on the executive to invite the same external panel back at the beginning of 2010 to ensure that the next renewal round is handled properly and that their findings and advice have been heeded fully.

**Note:** If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the executive for consideration.

### **Comments of the Deputy Chief Executive**

To follow.

## **2. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN** (seconded by Councillor Michelle Holford)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (6), council assembly shall consider this motion.

### **National Challenge for Schools**

1. Council notes the recent launch of the National Challenge for Schools, intended to reduce to zero the number of schools where fewer than 30% of pupils achieve grades A\*-C at GCSE and welcomes the announcement of funding to assist schools to improve standards.
2. Council notes with concern statements made at the launch by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families where he made reference to 638 'failing' schools.
3. Council notes with concern that this approach takes no account whatever of either individual or local circumstances, value-added ratings for individual schools or improvements already underway.
4. Council notes that in Southwark, three schools – the Academy at Peckham, Geoffrey Chaucer School and Kingsdale School – are on the list of 638 schools, but notes that:
  - a) The Academy at Peckham has been improving rapidly and is already part of the academy programme;
  - b) Geoffrey Chaucer School has shown rapid improvement since the council intervened, that the latest Ofsted inspection report noted that it "has improved significantly over the last two years and now provides a satisfactory education" and that it is set to become an academy later this year;
  - c) Kingsdale School is one of the fastest improving schools in the country and was recently recognised as such by Lord Adonis, the London Schools Minister as the most improved school in England.

5. Council notes with concern the Secretary of State's announcement that the government might intervene to either force these schools to convert into academies or even to close if certain requirements are not met.
6. Council notes the hard work of students, teachers, heads and council staff to improve results at these three schools and notes with dismay the distress which this announcement has caused them.
7. Council expresses its dismay at the lack of context behind the Secretary of State's statements and its opposition to direct government interference in these three schools.
8. Council therefore calls on leaders of all political parties in Southwark to sign a letter expressing support for the students, staff and head teachers at the Academy at Peckham, Geoffrey Chaucer and Kingsdale Schools.

**Note:** If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the executive for consideration.

### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Children's Services**

To follow.

### **3. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE** (seconded by Councillor Peter John)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (6), council assembly shall consider this motion.

#### **Bus and Tram Discount Card**

1. Council assembly believes that the bus and tram discount card, which provides half-price bus travel for Londoners on income support, provides valuable assistance to the less well off in Southwark and notes that over 17,000 Southwark residents are eligible for the card.
2. Council assembly notes that the Mayor of London Boris Johnson announced over the late May bank holiday weekend that the bus and tram discount card would be scrapped from this August with the last cards becoming invalid in late February next year. Council Assembly also notes that the scrapping of this discount was not mentioned in Boris Johnson's manifesto for the mayoralty.
3. Council assembly notes that since then Mayor Johnson's office has announced that the Mayor has asked officials to "consider" a backtrack on that announcement, but that he has made no concrete proposals to save the scheme.
4. Council assembly notes that the removal of the discount card will lead to the poorest people in the borough facing an overnight 100% increase in bus fares from 45p to 90p for single fares and from £6.50 to £13.00 for a weekly bus pass. This latter will lead to the travel bill for those on income support potentially rising by in excess of £330 per year.
5. Council assembly further notes that at Mayor's question time on July 18 2008, the Mayor refused to commit to his predecessor's pledge not to raise bus fares in the coming year, thereby raising the prospect of significant fare rises in the near future which will hit the poorest particularly hard if the bus and tram discount card is removed.

6. Council assembly resolves to request the executive to make public representations to the Mayor of London expressing its very strong concerns over the effect that the removal of the discount card will have on some of the most vulnerable families in Southwark and the damage that its withdrawal will cause to efforts to tackle poverty, worklessness and isolation in the borough.
7. Council assembly further resolves to request that the executive should call on the Mayor to withdraw the threat from the discount card and for him to come forward with new proposals for the funding of the card as a matter of urgency, given that there now remains less than two months before cards begin to expire without the potential for renewal.

**Note:** If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the executive for consideration.

#### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods**

1. The scheme was introduced following the fuel cost savings achieved by the former Mayor of London's agreement with the government of Venezuela for a 20 per cent reduction in its fuel bill in exchange for the provision of technical assistance in transport and city management to Venezuela.
2. The scheme was announced in February 2007 and introduced in summer 2007 with the discount available for a period of six months and subject to review.
3. The council do not issue discount cards. This is the responsibility for Transport for London.

#### **4. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON** (seconded by Councillor Jonathan Mitchell)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (6), council assembly shall consider this motion.

#### **Child Poverty**

1. Council notes that in 1999, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair committed the Labour government to halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020 and that this commitment has been reaffirmed on more than one occasion.
2. Council notes that child poverty is particularly acute in inner London boroughs like Southwark and notes that 51 per cent of children in inner London live in income poverty, compared with 29 per cent in England.
3. Council notes that the government is set to fail to meet its target of halving child poverty by 2010 and that on June 10 2008, the Department for Work and Pensions reported that child poverty has risen again for the second year in a row.
4. Council believes that after more than a decade of Labour government, these figures demonstrate the abject failure of the Labour Party nationally to tackle problems of poverty in deprived areas.
5. Council therefore welcomes the steps taken by Southwark Council to do what it can to address the causes of child poverty, notably:

- a) Maintaining the Southwark Credit Union which provides 5,300 Southwark residents with flexible savings and low cost loans - an example cited as 'good practice' by the London Child Poverty Commission;
  - b) Reducing the time homeless families spend in bed and breakfasts to just one week;
  - c) Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) to 1 in 10.
6. Council notes that despite these efforts, there is still a great deal to be done to reduce child poverty in Southwark.
  7. Council notes the report by the Department for Work and Pensions, 'Public Attitudes on child poverty' which highlighted the central role of the national government in tackling poverty.
  8. Council therefore calls on the executive to write to the Prime Minister, seeking a renewed commitment to meet the 2010 and 2020 targets and to work with Southwark and other local authorities to support their efforts to tackle child poverty.

**Note:** If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the executive for consideration.

#### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Children's Services**

To follow.

#### **5. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER** (seconded by Councillor Abdul Mohammed)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 3.10(4), council assembly shall consider this motion.

#### **East Street Market**

1. Council assembly notes the strong support for the petition on the repair of East Street Market.
2. Council assembly calls on the executive to carry out much needed maintenance work to the market including filling potholes, installing new pavements and resurfacing the road.
3. Council assembly believes that the present state of the market is a hazard to local people and market traders and recognises that residents have sustained injuries recently as a result of neglect by the council.
4. Council assembly believes that the market is a genuine part of the Walworth area's heritage, that it has the potential to attract a significant number of people to the area and that the urgent repair work should, therefore, feed into a broader regeneration of the market.
5. Council assembly calls on the executive to investigate how the market's future can be sustained and improved and consult with local residents, market users and market traders on the same. It calls on the executive to report back the results of that investigation to council assembly in no less than six months.

#### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Environment and Housing**

To follow.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Member Motions	Town Hall Peckham Road London SE5 8UB	Constitutional Team 020 7525 7228

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Team Manager
<b>Report Author</b>	Lesley John, Constitutional Officer
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