

## **Item 1: Interview with Executive Member for Resources**

The following questions were submitted to Councillor Lorraine Zuleta, Executive Member for Resources, for response at the Regeneration and Resources Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting on 18 November 2004.

1. Would the Executive member confirm that the Executive's decision to go for a Council tax increase of 5% for 2005/06 is based on an assessment of local needs by an autonomous local authority? And, if so, would she set out how that assessment was made?
2. Would the Executive Member confirm that the 5% is intended to refer to the increase for Southwark purposes? And, if so, advise what steps her colleagues, Members of the GLA Assembly, will be doing to ensure that the GLA precept increase is also limited to 5%?
3. Will savings be required to meet the Executive's objective of limiting the tax increase to 5%? If so, will the achievement of savings be limited to that purpose, or is it the Executive's intention to create further savings to make way for growth in 2005/06?
4. If growth is contemplated,
  - a) why did the Executive not call, at its meeting on 2 November for exemplification of the required savings at various levels?
  - b) what are the Executive's priorities for growth?
  - c) when will growth options be available to the Scrutiny function?
5. Is it the executive's intention to seek savings only from the areas mentioned in paragraph 5 of their decision on 2 November? Please could she explain what is meant by the reference in that paragraph to "other recommendations of the Gershon report"? In what respect are these relevant to Southwark?
6. Are there areas of "discretionary expenditure" in which the Executive is seeking savings? Is it looking at the areas referred to in paragraph 23 and Appendix 2 of item 12, Executive, 2 November?
7. In respect of the first generation Public Service Agreement is the Executive Member confident of receiving about £2m (for revenue purposes) of the promised Performance Reward (total about £8m) in 2005/06? If so, how does she plan to spend it?
8. When will the Executive be considering the capital programme for 2005/06? What steps are proposed to ensure a proper tie-in with revenue budgeting?
9. Has the executive abandoned plans to achieve medium-term savings from the Customer Service Centre? If not, what is the forward plan for achieving such savings? It is known that Executive plans to make substantial charges to service areas over the CSC contract period, in order to keep the uncovered cost of the CSC to manageable levels. Would the Executive member please produce a schedule of such charges, by service area, for the 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 years?

10. Why is the Executive's original schedule for opening of one-stop shops not being adhered to? What savings for 05/06 and 06/07 could be achieved by adhering to it?
11. With regard to the Executive Member's recent answer to a question in Council on departures from the policy of placing all capital receipts in a common pool, to be disposed of in the interests of the Borough as a whole, would she (a) confirm that that policy has now been abandoned and, if so (b) explain whether there are any criteria which the Executive uses for the allocation of capital receipts from asset sales and other relevant sources?
12. What steps are you taking to recruit a new Finance Director and what is the recruitment process likely to cost in the current year?
13. What interim arrangements are you making to ensure that the budgeting process will be completed on time and that routine monitoring continues?
14. What progress is being made with better integrating the devolved financial accounting systems across the Council so that meaningful comparative information can be readily retrieved? Do you consider that finance should be administered centrally or remain devolved? Do Executive Members monitor expenditure at Business Unit level?
15. Are there problems with the way the Hay Scheme is implemented in Southwark that you think need to be addressed in order to improve recruitment and retention of key skilled staff? If so, how do you propose these problems should be tackled?
16. Are there any indications now that the Government will continue to give Southwark a level of grant related to the total grant it gave in 2003/04, or will the grant be based on the level awarded in November 2003?
17. How do you intend to address the problem that the government's assumed national council tax for 2003/04 was set 21% higher than Southwark's actual tax rate for that year, and how do you see this affecting Revenue Support Grant for 2005/06 and future years?
18. How are you tackling the problem of getting Departments to make efficiency savings? What targets are you giving them?
19. How successful have you been in reducing the net costs of procurement? On what basis are you measuring success?
20. What level of provision needs to be made in 2004/05 to ensure on-going contract commitments can be met next year?
21. What special grants have been given to Southwark to administer in 2003/04 (including, eg. funds for the New Deal for Communities, Single Regeneration Budget, Southwark Alliance as well as those which Southwark directly controls). Please specify the amounts of each grant and for what purpose each was given. Please also specify in each case whether the council is the "accountable body".

22. What use do you see for prudential borrowing in 2004/05? Is prudential borrowing intended to play a major role in Housing Strategy? What level of prudential borrowing do you consider is sustainable in terms of the General Fund?
23. What services, if any, can the Council profitably market? How much income could be generated by marketing services in 2004/05?
24. As regards the implementation of the CSC, how confident are you that departmental managers and Liberata will be willing to release staff with appropriate skills and background to Pearsons?
25. What steps are you taking to ensure that adequate numbers of staff with appropriate skills are going to accept transfer to Pearsons?
26. Are there areas in your portfolio that would, in your view, benefit from being scrutinised and/or where scrutiny would assist you in carrying out your responsibilities?

### **Section 106 Payments / Earlier Planning Gain Money**

27. Please advise on how much Section 106 payments/earlier planning gain money has been negotiated for planning applications over either the last 12 years, or for whatever period records are readily available.
28. How much of this has been paid to the Council?
29. How much has been paid over to cover the benefiting bodies/ structures, projects etc?
30. How much is outstanding from developers as debt? How much of this is for projects that were cancelled or postponed and time-elapsed? How much of this is still outstanding from developments that took place?
31. How much relates to projects where planning gain money/ s106 was paid for wider general purposes but has still to find a home?