

Item 1: Executive Interview

Regeneration and Resources Scrutiny Sub-Committee, 12 January 2006

Questions to Deputy Leader of the Council – Elephant and Castle regeneration responsibilities:

1. What is the role of the council and the Executive Member in protecting the interests of the existing businesses at Elephant and Castle?
2. Has the Executive Member received a copy of the report dated 10 October 2005 ("the October Report") issued by Business Extra entitled "Generic Professional Legal and Survey Advice for Existing Small Businesses – Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre"? If so, how is the Executive addressing the suggestions for easing the transitional pain for such businesses as set out in the October 2005 report, especially in paragraphs 4.29, 5.2.3, 6.6 to 6.10, 8.5 and 8.6?
3. The October Report makes repeated reference to the importance of the Development Agreement which the Council will enter into with the selected developer.

Has the Executive yet decided upon its policy on what will be included in the Agreement, with particular regard to the issues raised in question 1 above? Has a draft "Heads of Agreement" been produced?

4. What progress is being made with the discussions with the three short-listed prospective developers? Have any dropped out? If so, why? What has been their reaction to the matters raised in the October Report? If such matters have not yet been raised with them, why not?
5. The Chief Executive's concurrent report to Council Assembly on 7 December 2005 (Supplemental agenda no.3) in respect of the deputation from Black Awareness Group states (paragraph 7) that certain matters would be presented to the Strategic Reference Group on 12 December 2005. What progress was made at that meeting?

6. The same concurrent report states (paragraphs 12 and 14) that all new commercial developments in the locality will be required to offer a proportion of their units to shopping centre businesses on a first refusal basis; and that a fund is to be set up to provide grants or low cost loans to assist with transitional costs.

Have the details of these policies been worked out? Have they been on the agenda of the Shopping Centre Liaison Group? When will the first of the new units be available? Is the Volvo showroom site in this category? What representations have been made by traders as to its suitability as a temporary or permanent site for displaced businesses?

7. Does the Executive have a policy with regard to the retention of the hundreds of mature and attractive trees in and around the Heygate Estate? Have discussions with prospective developers addressed this point?

8. The Mayor of London issued a press release dated 14 December 2005 headed "CRE should investigate Southwark Council's plans for Elephant and Castle". In this he refers to a meeting with the Leader of the Council.

When was that meeting? Who else was present? What evidence did the Mayor put forward to justify his call for a reference to the CRE? Was any of that evidence specifically related to the Elephant and Castle? Did that evidence contain any allegation that the Council's scrutiny of the E&C regeneration had displayed any racial discrimination? If it is the opinion of the Executive that there is no evidence to justify a reference to the CRE in respect of the E&C what formal response has been, or is to be issued, to the Mayor and/or the CRE?

9. In the above-mentioned press release, the Mayor asserts that "throughout 2005 stakeholders involved in planning and regeneration matters in Southwark have stated that black Londoners in Southwark are not actively included and fully participating in decision-making on this major development"; in Note 1 to the release he states; "Southwark Council delivers the Elephant and Castle regeneration programme through Elephant Links". In the October report (see question 1 above) Elephant Links is described as "the regeneration partnership of the London Development Agency and Southwark Council".

Would the Executive member advise what representations the London Development Agency has made in 2005 or earlier on the matters which are apparently causing concern to the Mayor of London? If any such representations have been received, in what forum were they made, and what was the Council's reaction? What is the Council's reaction to the Mayor's suggestion (note 4 to his release) that he has "asked the LDA to consider establishing a steering group with Southwark Council and key stakeholders to improve scrutiny and transparency"?

10. How will the reaction of the Council/Southwark Alliance to the Government's Local Enterprise Grant Initiative (LEGI) assist the Elephant and Castle regeneration?
11. Will Members and/or officers be attending the international property conference, MIPIM, in 2006? If so, how did officer attendance in 2005 assist the Council's regeneration effort, and what is expected of attendance in 2006?