

Council Assembly (Ordinary Meeting)

Wednesday 23 January 2013
7.00 pm

The Charter School, Red Post Hill, London SE24 9JH

Supplemental Agenda No.3

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Contact

Lesley John on 020 7525 7228 or 020 7525 7222 or email: lesley.john@southwark.gov.uk;
andrew.weir@southwark.gov.uk; constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk
Webpage: <http://www.southwark.gov.uk>

Date: 22 January 2013

Agenda Item 2.3

Item No. 2.3	Classification: Open	Date: 23 January 2013	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Deputation Requests on the Theme – Affordable Housing and Social Housing	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That council assembly notes the deputation requests received for consideration by this meeting as listed in paragraph 3 of the report.
2. That council assembly considers whether or not to hear a deputation from the three groups listed in paragraph 8 of the report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Deputations received for this meeting

3. The following deputation requests have been received by the deadline for consideration by this meeting and they are list in the order received below:
 - Leathermarket Joint Management Board
 - Southwark Citizen Advice Bureaux Service
 - Rotherhithe Area Housing Forum
 - Residents of Draper House SE1
 - Residents of Four Squares Estate.
4. The details for the deputations on the themed debate are set out in this report.

Procedure at the meeting

5. The council assembly procedure rule 2.6 (11) states that no more than three deputations shall be considered at any one meeting, and deputations shall be considered in the order of receipt. However the meeting can decide to suspend this rule in order to hear more or vary the order.
6. When considering whether to hear the deputation request, council assembly can decide:
 - to receive the deputation at this meeting or a future meeting; *or*
 - that the deputation not be received; *or*
 - to refer the deputation to the most appropriate committee/sub-committee.
7. A deputation shall consist of no more than six people, including its spokesperson. One member of the deputation shall be allowed to address the meeting for no longer than five minutes. The deputation spokesperson or any member of the deputation nominated by him or her shall be invited to ask a question of the leader or relevant cabinet member. After this time councillors

may ask questions of the deputation for up to five minutes. At the conclusion of the questions, the deputation will be shown to the public seating area where they may listen to the remainder of the open section of the meeting.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Deputation requests on the themed debate

8. The following deputation requests were received on the theme. The deputations are listed in order of receipt.

1. Deputation from Leathermarket Joint Management Board

The deputation request states:

“We would like to reflect on the JMB’s experience of social housing issues in the north of the borough, working to deliver new housing in the area, the interaction with neighbourhood planning process and our reflections on the housing commission report.”

2. Deputation Southwark Citizen Advice Bureaux Service

The deputation request states:

“We would like to raise our concerns about how some of the government's welfare reform changes will affect the residents that we see.

“In particular we would like to highlight the difficulties that will face social housing tenants who will have their housing benefit reduced, because they are deemed to be under occupying their homes. It is estimated that over 4,000 residents will be affected.

“We would also like to raise concerns about how the direct payment of rent for social housing tenants may lead to an increase in rent arrears and subsequent eviction.”

3. Deputation from Rotherhithe Area Housing Forum

The deputation request states:

Every time we have a big development, the developers have to provide a certain amount of affordable housing. They usually are too expensive for locals. We're allowed to build now; don't give us affordable housing from developers, give us the money and we'll build ourselves. The estates are changing; people are having to move out because they can't afford it. The new benefits mean people are having to pay £14/week extra for unused rooms; we need more cheap housing that people can move into to fit them. Developers have agreed that they'd be happy to give us the money, if you can agree to take it and build houses with it.

At the last forum meeting, we talked about affordable housing; all local tenants there are in agreement. We want affordable housing for local tenants - take the money and build yourselves; this gives you stock that can relieve immediate pressure for local tenants. We are losing our communities because no one can afford to live in the area. Old people in

the area are neglected because their children can't afford to live nearby. There are areas that can be used to build on, if we have the money.

4. Deputation Residents of Draper House SE1

This deputation request has been received from a group of local residents. It states:

“Many residents at Draper House are concerned that the £5m major work scheme at has been poorly managed. The concern reached a crisis when one of our neighbours was rushed to hospital following a leak from a refitted boiler, which had been certified as safe by Southwark's contractors. Given the recent public apology from Councillor Wingfield regarding the call centre, many council tenants, tenants of leaseholders, and leaseholders in Draper House are concerned the lacklustre response to repairs reaches deep into the major works department. Many residents feel that the work is shoddy, contractor staff are unaccountable, and housing staff appear are unable to manage, or hold contractors to account. We would like to ask the deputy leader: When was he made aware of the problems at Draper House? Will he visit Draper House, or any of our regular meetings? Is he aware that the designs, proposals and plans are unpopular, and appear to have been foisted upon us?”

5. Deputation from residents of Four Squares Estate

This deputation request has been received from a group of local residents who state the deputation is about:

“Our satisfaction about the way our contracts are being managed. Tenants and leaseholders alike are happy the way the council and the contractors have conducted themselves so far. We know that the repairs have been slow and delayed, but over the last few years this has improved to fairly reasonable time scales. The quality of repairs is improving. We are extremely pleased that the council is bringing the call centre back in house. We would like to see resident engagement in this way on all future Major Works project on estates throughout the borough. We do not feel that a review of all major works is very helpful at the moment and we would be against that. More consultation with the Four Squares Estate is needed.”

Other deputation requests received by the deadline

9. There were no other deputation requests received by the deadline.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Council Assembly Procedure Rule 2.6, Southwark Constitution	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Lesley John 020 7525 7228

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager	
Report Author	Lesley John, Constitutional Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 January 2013	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	21 January 2013	

Council Assembly - 23 January 2013

Community views – Affordable and social housing

- I am on ESA with three children and can only afford my rent because I get housing benefit. I don't have access to the internet, so I don't what is going on.
- I am a pensioner, I don't get anything to do with affordable housing.
- I think that the rent is too high for what we get, and with Council tax and water rates it's all getting too much. I don't see it changing much in the future, not with the present government, especially pensioners.
- It's very hard these days, most people are having to rent anyway, it's too expensive to buy your own house...I don't think the government is doing enough to make housing cheaper. I'm a working man in my 30s (and though I earn a decent salary) I still can't afford to get on the housing ladder....we're all getting into this poverty trap really. I have a friend and they're taking benefits off him, he's becoming suicidal because he feels like he's working to replace his benefits and he can barely get by, he's not sure whether he will be evicted in the next few months and he's been there years. The council can only do so much....it's a lot of responsibility to take on, to look out for your neighbour, though.
- There is not enough affordable housing.
- I work 70 hours a week, and rent a room for £300, a week which was the cheapest I could find! Probably £200 and £250 would be better...I have to budget more and more, but I think that I am actually doing rather well. I am from Bulgaria and came to live here after travelling when I completed my degree. I am registered as self-employed and many of these jobs are available but you have to put the effort in, benefits are good but there are many people taking advantage.
- Where people have/earn enough money or where the rent is low enough, without people having to claim housing benefit. Hexagon Housing recently upped my rent by 10%, yet I'm not claiming housing benefit, so my increased rent is difficult to afford.
- [Housing] is so expensive; people who were able to buy once upon a time can't even buy now. That's disgusting; the prices are disgusting. They should bring it down so the average person can buy and live. People are suffering.

Affordable house prices used to be about £70,000 to £80,000. [Nowadays] it's okay around £100,000 or maybe 120,000, because that's what the average person or 2 people working can afford to buy, but when it's £300,000, £400,000, £500,000 no average person can buy, yet they are the ones who are on the streets.

- Affordable housing is something most people can afford, I guess, regardless of their situation. It shouldn't matter if in a job or no job or on a minimum wage there should be a house available for everyone really. In London there definitely is not enough affordable housing. Affordable housing single parent should be able to afford own property.
- My rent arrears are not a lot only £80 but it's a lot when you think about it. Where am I going to get £80 from when I don't work? Not bad when you don't sign on and pay full housing benefit, so can't complain, my house is affordable but I messed up.

- [Affordable housing is] about having enough money to rent somewhere. Cause I can't. Price range, renting a property, well myself, I'd say £700 a month maybe, but with a child I think it should be lower, being honest with you, because, it in fact goes up higher, even a one bedroom. I've looked at that and I can't afford it, they charge too much nowadays. And I don't want to go into a hostel with my child, so I'm staying with my parents. And I've got sisters that live there too, so it's too much, as it is. But I can't afford to move out, and I won't go into hostel because you get dangerous people who live in hostels. It is a step backward in your life. I work part time, so I can't afford £700 a month.
- People can't afford housing now, there is no money. Some people can't find a suitable place to rent; it is expensive renting around here. It is very hard around here getting a room to rent, it is very expensive. Well the council has to build more houses ain't it, obviously you have to build more houses. Some people find it hard to rent. I own my own home there. So it's good for me, but the younger generation it is very hard. The most important thing is to get a job, if you don't get a job how are you going to afford to pay the rent, it's impossible. The younger age group have it hard.
- I guess affordable housing means different things to different people, but I guess it means that people on low incomes, or even ordinary incomes, should be able to afford to live in Southwark, and not have to move out to other places that are less expensive. People are being priced out all the time, from all areas of London. My feeling is that these days nothing can really be described as affordable. Council housing is, but then who can ever get a council house to rent. If councils aren't building stuff that can only get worse, and it has been the same way for years. It's been building up, building up, and then the government say; oh look we have a lot of people who can't find somewhere to live, how strange!
- I work on the buildings and I rent a flat in Camberwell, but it is getting impossible. The wages we are getting paid keep going down not up, as there are always many more people than are needed. I was thinking of moving out but then I would only have to pay a fortune in train fares to get to work. It's important what the council here is doing, it's important work, you need to do it, good luck to you.

AMENDMENTS

ITEM 3.3 – MEMBERS’ MOTIONS ON THE THEME: MOTION 1 - GENUINELY AFFORDABLE COUNCIL HOUSING FOR SOUTHWARK (see pages 3 - 4 of the main agenda)

AMENDMENT A

Moved: Councillor Michael Bukola

Seconded: Councillor Nick Stanton

Delete all and insert:

1. Council regrets Labour spin rather than substance on housing in Southwark, including:
 - Labour’s claim to be building 1,000 new council homes when in fact only 13 have been provided since they took control of the council in 2010 whilst more than 400 have been sold or demolished.
 - Labour’s claim that the previous Liberal Democrat administration did not build any council homes when they know full well that building new council homes was only made possible because of rule changes brought in by the present coalition government.
 - Labour’s rewriting of history on decent homes funding, given that the previous Labour government failed to allocate adequate funding to deal with decades of neglect of council homes in Southwark, in contrast to the £77m allocated to date by the coalition government.
 - Labour’s dismal offering of only 8 social rent homes out of 235 Phase 1 properties at the Heygate regeneration, and only after sustained pressure from local campaigners and Liberal Democrats agreeing to reduce rents at some other properties to a level nearer to, but not meeting, social rents.
 - Labour’s refusal to acknowledge the awful housing record of the previous Labour government, which presided over the lowest level of house building since the Second World War, a fall in social housing stock of 420,000 homes, a rise of 741,000 households on housing waiting lists, imposed top-down housing targets from Whitehall and refused to allow councils to build their own homes.
2. Council therefore calls on cabinet to spend less time on political spin and more time sorting out the chaos in the housing department, negotiating better deals with developers and providing a far greater level of genuinely affordable housing in Southwark.

AMENDMENT B

Moved: Councillor Toby Eckersley

Seconded: Councillor Lewis Robinson

Delete all after bullet point 3 in sub-clause 1 i.e. deleting from "And rejecting the government's..."

Note: If Amendment A is carried Amendment B would fall.

ITEM 3.3 – MEMBERS’ MOTIONS ON THE THEME: MOTION 2 - MAJOR WORKS AND HOUSING REPAIRS (see pages 4 - 5 of the main agenda)

AMENDMENT C

Moved: Councillor Gavin Edwards

Seconded: Councillor Neil Coyle

Delete all and insert:

1. Council assembly regrets the incident at Draper House and notes that the council is doing everything in its power to ensure people feel safe in their homes. It notes that:
 - An investigation was immediately begun into the cause of the incident and that the council has agreed to fully adopt any recommendations to ensure residents' safety.
 - Properties where similar work was carried out are undergoing inspection by the council's compliance team to ensure work has been done properly and to the required safety standards.
 - The council has also alerted the health and safety executive as safety is its top priority.
2. Council assembly notes that at Four Squares the project has been completely turned round. The uncertainty for residents caused by the previous Liberal Democrat administration's failed housing investment programme and failure to complete security works has now been replaced with certainty as the works start driving forward the £26 million investment on the estate. The cabinet member for housing and council officers have met regularly with residents throughout the process and the first of the packaged works is now being delivered on time, despite some unforeseen structural issues.
3. Council assembly welcomes the steps taken by the current administration to improve major works project management and performance it inherited from the Liberal Democrats, including:
 - Labour's £326 million warm dry safe programme which is realistic, fully-costed and sets out a clear timetable so residents know exactly when their works will take place.
 - A substantial programme of fire risk assessment works, refurbishment of hostels and a programme of improvement to tenants and residents association halls - with 2013/14 individual heating programme brought forward into 2012/13, meaning inefficient boilers are being replaced with more efficient models helping to deliver savings for resident and tackle fuel poverty.
 - The restructure and the setting up of project management teams to give improved focus to project management on site and a more open and transparent culture where problems can be quickly identified and resources committed accordingly.

- A comprehensive resident consultation process “Putting Residents First” which ensures the council is clear with residents from the outset about what we are delivering and how they can be involved.
4. Council assembly notes the good progress has been made in improving the repairs service but acknowledges that the service started from a low base thanks to the arrangements put in place by the previous Liberal Democrat administration. It notes that contracts have been terminated with Just Housing, Morrison and the council is a few months away from bringing the call centre in-house. It notes that overall contract management is improving. There is a greater focus on completing repairs quickly and to a high standard leading to reduced costs and a reduction in duplication. Repairs completed right first time is improving as is satisfaction with the repairs service. Complaint escalations are at an all time low as are the number of overdue orders.
 5. Council assembly notes that the telephone answering performance at the customer services centre (CSC) for repairs was poor in the last quarter of 2012. This is because the repairs contractor for the south of the borough changed which caused some disruption and resulted in an increase in demand for the telephone service that lasted longer than we predicted. It notes that the council provided further resources and call waiting times have reduced considerably in the first two weeks of 2013. It notes that a customer access strategy has been developed to improve the quality of customer services, ease of accessibility and reduce costs and that the new My Southwark, customer service point opened at The Blue in Bermondsey in mid December and represents the prototype for the future of face to face customer services in Southwark.
 6. Council assembly believes an immediate review of major works will be to the detriment of tenants with regards to their works and upgrades being completed on time and would result in severe costs to leaseholders.
 7. Council assembly therefore resolves on cabinet to:
 - Continue to deliver its £326 million housing investment programme which will make every council home in Southwark warm, dry and safe by 2016.
 - Continue to improve management of major works contracts and to develop its customer access strategy which will help to improve the quality of the council’s customer services.

ITEM 5.2 – MEMBERS’ MOTIONS: MOTION 1 - SAVE SOUTHWARK EMERGENCY SERVICES (see pages 13 - 15 of the main agenda)

AMENDMENT D

Moved: Councillor James Barber
Seconded: Councillor Geoffrey Thornton

Delete all and **insert:**

1. Council regrets the proposed cuts to emergency services in the borough.
2. Council notes that the leader of the Labour Party Ed Miliband MP said in October 2012: “Whoever was in government now there would still need to be some cuts”.
3. Council believes however that the safety of residents is paramount and no emergency services should be lost without an adequate replacement first being put in place.
4. Council also believes that the safety of Southwark residents is of concern across the political divide and recognises that councillors from all three parties in Southwark as well as Simon Hughes MP and other local MPs have campaigned to protect local emergency services from closure.
5. Therefore council calls on the cabinet to support the view of local ward councillors across the borough that savings must be made in other ways so that police front desks remain in Rotherhithe and East Dulwich, Southwark fire station is not closed, Peckham retains two fire engines and Lewisham A & E department remains open.

AMENDMENT E

Moved: Councillor Michael Mitchell
Seconded: Councillor Lewis Robinson

Delete all after "Londoners" in line 1 and **insert:**

“is of paramount importance and therefore calls on the cabinet to refrain from party political posturing and co-operate with the Metropolitan Police Service and Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime in the search for and provision of operational and ‘front counter’ premises in areas of the borough affected by proposals to close police stations.”

Note: If Amendment D is carried Amendment E would fall.

AMENDMENT F

Moved: Councillor Helen Hayes
Seconded: Councillor Andy Simmons

Insert at end:

5. Council assembly notes that since the substantive motion was drafted the Mayor has published his draft police and crime strategy for London, and that this document makes a number of recommendations which will have serious consequences for Southwark if they are implemented:
 - (a) The proposed closure of East Dulwich, Gipsy Hill and Sydenham police stations, which will leave a 'black hole' in counter service provision for the residents of College, Village and East Dulwich wards.
 - (b) The proposed closure of Rotherhithe police station, which will leave an isolated peninsula community without adequate access to dedicated police resources.
 - (c) The proposed dismantling of the neighbourhood policing model such that the current dedicated ward based teams of six staff members (one sergeant, three police constables and two police community support officers) will be reduced to one dedicated police constable plus a 'named sergeant'.
6. Council assembly notes the Mayor's election manifesto commitment not to close any police station facility without opening an 'equivalent or better' facility in the same area, and notes that the draft police and crime strategy breaks this pledge.
7. Council assembly deplores the lack of cross-borough co-ordination in planning police station closures which has resulted in the 'black hole' in counter service provision in the Dulwich and Crystal Palace areas, which are close to the boundary with four other London boroughs.
8. Council assembly further deplores the dismantling of the neighbourhood policing model which will see the majority of officers deployed to high crime areas, to the detriment of the very important and successful community liaison and crime prevention roles which have helped to keep crime low.
9. Council assembly records its grave concern at the impact of both police station closures and the dismantling of the neighbourhood policing model on vulnerable residents, victims of domestic violence and others for whom the local police station is a place of safety; and on the ability of the police to record crime statistics accurately. Further, council assembly is concerned at the impact of police station closures on the management of local police teams and the potential for valuable police time to be lost to wards in the south of the borough due to officer travel time from operational bases in the north of the borough.
10. Whilst council assembly acknowledges the need to make budget savings, it believes the 20% cut imposed by the Tory Liberal Democrat government goes too far and too fast. In addition whilst council assembly recognises the inappropriateness of some current police station buildings for on-going use, for

example the current East Dulwich police station building, it is extremely concerning that the draft police and crime plan contains no proposals for alternative provision, no definition of 'equal or better' against which future performance can be measured, and no creative thinking. Council assembly requests that the cabinet calls upon the Mayor to honour his manifesto commitment concerning police counter facilities, and to rethink the proposals for the south of the borough and for Rotherhithe, working creatively with the council and local communities, to ensure that the dangerous 'black hole' scenario is averted.

11. Council assembly recognises the council's commitment to working creatively with the Metropolitan Police in identifying alternative premises which have the potential to meet police security criteria in the south of the borough and in Rotherhithe.

Note: If either Amendment D or Amendment E is carried, Amendment F would fall.

ITEM 5.2 – MEMBERS’ MOTIONS: MOTION 2 – DNA DATABASE (see pages 14 - 15 of the main agenda)

AMENDMENT G

Moved: Councillor Martin Seaton
Seconded: Councillor Renata Hamvas

Delete paragraphs 5 and 6 and **insert:**

“Council assembly notes the announcement that DNA samples held for innocent people will be destroyed in 4 months time in May 2013 and supports the Metropolitan Police Service’s early deletion request scheme.”

Delete the first bullet point in paragraph 7.

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