

Council Assembly

Wednesday 18 March 2026

7.00 pm

Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Tabled Items

List of Contents

Item No.	Title	Page No.
1.3.	Notification of any items of business which the mayor deems urgent	1 - 2
	Programme Motion	
2.2.	Public question time	3
	Response to public question	
5.1.	Members' question time	4 - 23
	Late question and response	
	Responses to members' questions	

Contact

Virginia Wynn-Jones on 020 7525 7055 or 020 7525 7222 or email: virginia.wynn-jones@southwark.gov.uk; andrew.weir@southwark.gov.uk; constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk
Webpage: <http://www.southwark.gov.uk>

Date: 18 March 2026

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY****(ORDINARY MEETING)****WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026****PROGRAMME MOTION**

The order of business and timings for the evening will be as follows:

Time	Business
19:00 – 19:10	1. Preliminary business and announcements
19:10 – 19:15	2.2 Public questions One public question
19:15 – 20:15 (15 minutes – 5 minutes' speech) (7 minutes) (5 minutes) (30 minutes) (3 minutes)	Themed debate 3.1 Community Evidence • Spring Community Hub • Active Communities Network 3.2 Motion on the Theme 1. Councillor Sarah King 2. Councillor David Watson, opposition spokesperson 3. Themed debate open to all other councillors 4. Cabinet member's right of reply to the debate
20:15 – 20:40 (4 minutes' speech and a question to cabinet member)	4. Deputations • Sonay Ozkutayli and St Saviours Residents • Southwark and Peckham Citizens • King's Maternity Voices Partnership • Latin Elephant
20:40 – 20:45	Recess
20:45 – 21:20 (5 minutes) (15 minutes) (15 minutes)	5.1 Members' Question Time • Late question • Members' questions to the leader • Members' questions to the cabinet
21:20 – 22:00	5.2 Motions
	Motion 1 – Tackling antisocial behaviour on Southwark's estates
	Motion 2 – Liberal Democrats will Fix Southwark
	Motion 3 – Protecting the Freedom Pass for Older Londoners
	Motion 4 – Southwark has no confidence in Sir Keir Starmer
22:00*	6. Reports
	6.1 – Proportionality and Allocation of Seats on Committees March 2026
	6.2 – Licensing Act 2003: Review of Statement of Licensing Policy 2026 to 2031
	6.3 – Pay Policy Statement 2026/27
	6.4 – Member Allowances Scheme 2026-2027
	6.5 – Calendar of meetings 2026-27
	6.6 – Special Urgency and Urgent Implementation Decisions – Annual Report 2026
	6.7 – Re-appointment of independent persons

* subject to the guillotine rule; maximum 15 minutes debate per item.

Note: Any time left remaining on any item will be rolled into the next items.

That the meeting be conducted as follows:

Item 3 - Themed debate

Community Evidence Submissions

To receive submissions from the groups listed in the themed section of the agenda:

- Spring Community Hub
- Active Communities Network

Format

A five minute presentation from the groups.

3.1 Motion on the theme

Themed debate

To run as listed in the timings above.

To have a single debate.

Item 4 Deputation requests:

To receive submissions from the groups listed in the deputation requests report in supplemental agenda no. 1:

- Sonay Ozkutayli and St Saviours Residents
- Southwark and Peckham Citizens
- King's Maternity Voices Partnership
- Latin Elephant

(Four minutes to speak, question to relevant cabinet member)

Item 5.2 General motions:

Each motion to have a single debate, subject to the guillotine.

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY****(ORDINARY MEETING)****WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026****PUBLIC QUESTION WITH RESPONSE****1. QUESTION FROM JK DORAN TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEW HOMES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

With the recent announcement that the number of 'affordable' homes to be delivered as part of the Canada Water Masterplan could be reduced to just 90 (or 3%) of the circa 3,000 new homes, can the council explain how the resulting situation aligns with its stated aims regarding 'affordable' housing?

RESPONSE

We have a clear policy in the Southwark Plan (2022) which sets the expectation for a minimum of 35% affordable housing subject to viability from the outset.

3% affordable housing has not been agreed at Canada Water by the council, nor the GLA.

All residential developments across London have been affected by the perfect storm of slow sales rates and stagnant values, high build cost inflation, increased regulation and increased borrowing cost.

Despite these challenges, we have one of the best records in London for delivering affordable housing. The most recent figures from the GLA – for 2024/25 - show that more homes for social rent were completed in Southwark than in any other London borough that year.

We have a long track record of working successfully with developers to deliver affordable housing but will also stand up to protect affordable housing – as with the Aylesham Centre proposal in Peckham, where we have argued at a planning inquiry that the proposal does not prioritise affordable housing in the way it should, and we await the Planning Inspectorate's decision.

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026

LATE QUESTION WITH RESPONSE

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

With new data coming to light this week showing that at least 14,000 thefts from the person involving a mobile phone have been reported since 2023, can the Leader provide her assessment of Labour's record on crime in light of Sadiq Khan's policing cuts, closing front counters, and Southwark Labour's failure to secure a police hub and slashing of community safety wardens?

RESPONSE

Sadiq Khan, a Labour Mayor, working with a Labour Government and hand in hand with councils across London – two thirds of which are Labour-run – has overseen real reductions in some of the most serious crimes affecting our city.

Last year, violent crime leading to injury fell in all 32 London boroughs. Southwark recorded some of the most significant reductions in the city. The number of homicides in London is now at ten-year low and last year we saw the lowest number of homicides of under-25s for more than twenty years. London's murder rate is now lower than cities like Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Madrid and major US cities.

Across London, we've seen 23,000 less thefts, almost 5000 fewer burglaries and nearly 15,000 less vehicle crimes. Just last month the Met said that the number of recorded phone thefts in London went from 81,365 in 2024 to 71,391 last year.

That progress has been made despite the Metropolitan Police Service (Met) being required to make £600m of cuts as part of the Liberal Democrat / Conservative coalition government's attack on public services. It is a testament to Sadiq Khan's sustained investment and focus on delivery. Just last month he announced a record £1.26bn from City Hall for policing and crime prevention for the year ahead. This funding includes maintaining neighbourhood police numbers, investing in town centre policing, and supporting specialist teams tackling violence and high-harm crime.

Alongside Met funded policing, Southwark Council has also stepped up its own direct investment to improve safety locally. Since 2023, Southwark Council has allocated an additional £2m to increase our Community Warden Service and create a dedicated town centre task force. Since summer 2025 a further £600,000 has been ringfenced to fund a nighttime uniformed patrol service to supplement our existing community warden service and in particular bolster the visible presence on the streets during the hours of darkness when residents say they feel more unsafe. We continue to work closely with the Met to identify suitable premises for a new police hub in the borough.

Southwark Council remains committed to addressing concerns around community safety and we recognised that it is one of our residents' key concerns. We know it is one of the issues people care about most, and we will continue to prioritise it with serious, long-term investment designed to repair the damage left by years of Liberal Democrat / Conservative cuts.

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS WITH RESPONSES

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN

Can the Leader provide an assessment of whether the Labour government's record has been beneficial to Southwark Council and its residents, and confirm whether the Government still has the full support of her group and administration?

RESPONSE

Labour won the 2024 general election on a mandate of change and is making strides in implementing that change, despite inheriting an economy with every public service on its knees - broken by Liberal Democrat and Conservative austerity.

Last year, Labour passed the landmark Renters' Rights Act to take power away from rogue landlords and give it back to Southwark renters. This comes into effect in May and will be a tangible change for thousands of our residents.

Labour is passing the Employment Rights Bill, which the Liberal Democrats, Reform and the Conservatives attempted to thwart in parliament, which will end zero hours contracts and give new day one rights to thousands of workers in our borough.

Labour has scrapped the two child cap, lifting 8,200 children in Southwark out of poverty. Waiting lists are once again coming down, having risen under the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives.

Labour is investing £39 billion in the biggest boost to social and affordable housing in a generation, has frozen rail fares for the first time in thirty years, invested £200 million in more neighbourhood police and police community support officers (PCSOs) – previously cut under the Liberal Democrats' watch – whilst giving new powers to the police to stop and seize illegal off-road e-bikes and e-scooters.

In London, under a Labour government, Labour Mayor and Labour council, violent crime is falling, air is cleaner, cycling easier and investment is going into our trains and Underground network.

In September, Labour recognised the state of Palestine, whilst in Southwark we became the first local authority to build the UN Genocide Convention into our pension investment framework.

We are not uncritical friends of the government. We have spoken publicly as a proud Borough of Sanctuary in opposition to the government's proposed changes to asylum and migration rules. We lobbied hard for more funding for Southwark's vital public services in the fair funding review and continue our national-leading campaign on behalf of our residents to secure the future of council housing for future generations.

Labour is the only party with the record and ambition to deliver for Southwark's residents. We cannot let the Liberal Democrats bring austerity back to Southwark, cutting the food budget for families in an emergency, or implementing unrealistic responses to serious issues - such as using gazebos to prevent crime. Nor can we let the Greens lose control of the council's finances, cutting money from temporary accommodation in a moment of crisis to fund vanity projects - risking everything we have achieved with our communities.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR KATH WHITTAM

Can the leader on behalf of the deputy cabinet member assure me that the service level agreement for the maintenance of the swimming pool at Canada Water is adequate given the 4 month closure such a short time after opening?

RESPONSE

We were all disappointed by the closure of Canada Water pool, shortly after its opening. The issue was related to the air handling unit caused by multiple parts failures, confirmed by independent engineers. Whilst the pool is now open again, I understand that does little to ease the frustration over the closure in the first instance.

We have a number of separate contracts relating to the various aspects of Canada Water leisure centre operation, from security, lift maintenance to water hygiene. We have confidence in these contracts, with all compliance and maintenance at the site up to date. On top of this we have appointed a technical manager, who will oversee, and ensure the quality of, all future works at the site.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CASSANDRA BROWN

What work has this council done to improve safety for women and girls over the past 4 years?

RESPONSE

Over the last four years, the council has delivered major improvements to improve safety in our borough, especially for women and girls.

We've worked closely with local businesses, especially in the nighttime economy, to roll out initiatives like Ask for Angela, to create 31 Safe Havens, and sign up 76 venues to the Women's Night Safety Charter. We've also distributed anti-spiking kits and personal safety alarms, and upgraded lighting, CCTV, and public spaces where women told us they felt unsafe.

More than 3,500 survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence have received specialist support, including advocacy, counselling, therapy for children, refuge spaces, and Safe Spaces. We've also invested heavily in prevention, with impactful campaigns like Through Her Eyes, healthy relationships sessions reaching over 2,300 young people, and free self-defence workshops attended by more than 250 women and girls.

We've kept our work rooted in women's voices through regular engagement events, high-profile awareness campaigns such as Stand With Her, and our annual Women's Safety Survey.

Our new groundbreaking Women's Safety Alliance, expands support to all victims of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) crimes, including those experiencing public-space harassment and violence. We are one of the first in London and nationally to develop and deliver support in this area. This will be complemented by the opening of our new dedicated building, supported by satellite sites from which services will be delivered enhancing access to specialist, trauma-informed support for all victims and survivors.

Together, these actions mark real progress toward a borough where women and girls are safer, supported, and heard.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR EMILY TESTER

Even after several major works scandals in which exposed appalling lack of transparency from the council, leaseholders on several estates are reporting that final bills are still being delayed and much greater than expected. On the Four Squares, some residents have waited over a decade or been hit with bills for works from many years before they bought their homes. Can the leader explain the reason for these delays, confirm if she will consider mitigations such as extending the interest free period beyond 3 years for resident leaseholders and extend an apology to those affected by this appalling mismanagement?

RESPONSE

Delays in issuing final accounts for historic major works, including at the Four Squares, have happened because the old partnering arrangements produced significant amounts of highly complex documentation around costs incurred.

Lengthy checks of this documentation, including resolving complex contract queries, have been necessary to ensure that leaseholders are only charged for costs that are valid and allowed under the lease.

To support homeowners at the Four Squares, the council has already extended the usual one-month repayment period under the lease, to an interest free instalment option of up to 36 months for resident leaseholders who make up nearly half of the sold properties on the estate. If residents require support with discussing payment options or further detail on the final account process, officers are available to assist.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR KETZIA HARPER

Can the leader tell me what Southwark Council will do to address the failing regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate and the council's broken relationship with Notting Hill Genesis to ensure the responsible expenditure of council resources and resident's safety moving forward?

RESPONSE

The relationship with Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) will be changing going forward to address the concerns raised by residents. The council and NHG have decided to take action to move ahead more quickly and work closely with estate residents about next steps.

As part of our work, NHG will deliver the next phase of the estate renewal programme, phase 2b, in accordance with our existing contractual obligations. Whilst this work progresses, we will simultaneously seek new development partners to move ahead with building new homes and facilities on the rest of the estate, speeding up the delivery of this critical project.

The council will work hand in hand with residents every step of the way, giving them real and genuine say over what comes next on their estates. This includes our dedicated Aylesbury Task Force who are working across various teams to improve service delivery for residents.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ESME DOBSON

Can the Leader update me on plans to open up a new public square on Rye Lane?

RESPONSE

Southwark Council and the community in Peckham have long shared the same ambition: to create a new public square on Rye Lane in front of Peckham Rye Station — a vibrant, generous civic space that restores the grandeur of the Victorian station and provides a true gateway into the town centre.

The 1930s arcade that currently blocks views and access to the station will be demolished, making way for a stunning new public square that will reveal the Grade II listed station from Rye Lane for the first time in generations. The space, codesigned with the community, will include high quality paving subtly inspired by African textile patterns, raised planters, new seating, improved lighting and CCTV, market infrastructure, and a new parade of retail units within the beautifully reopened railway arches — creating a welcoming, safe and lively civic space for residents, visitors and local entrepreneurs.

The new square is scheduled for completion in Autumn 2027. Throughout this period Peckham Rye Station will remain open. This marks the culmination of our £27m of investment for the regeneration of the station. I'd also like to thank our partners in this development, including the GLA, Network Rail and Arch Co. We will continue to lobby government for the £45m required for the full upgrade of the station, to provide full step free access to all platforms, a second entrance and an updated concourse.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR IRINA VON WIESE

Recent Met data has shown that under Labour, Southwark has the highest crime rate in South East London. Can the leader confirm what steps have been taken in concert with the police to ensure that residents are safe?

RESPONSE

Led by a Labour Mayor, working hand in hand with Labour councils across the city, violent crime in London is falling. The number of violent crimes leading to injury reduced in all 32 boroughs last year, with almost 9,000 fewer offences across the city. Reducing levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in the borough is critical for everyone in our borough to live good lives. Violent crime, theft, burglary and drug taking are causes of real concern in our communities and tackling these is, and will remain, a key priority for this council.

Extra investment by the council has created additional uniformed patrols. Between 8 and 10 officers are now on duty every evening from 6pm to 2am, seven days a week, providing around 450 hours of visible patrols each week. The council has also invested £3m to upgrade town centre CCTV to HD and has recently upgraded streetlights across the borough.

On Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), joint action days have included distributing over 400 personal safety alarms to women and giving 76 anti-spiking kits to local venues. Nighttime safety has been strengthened through 31 Safe Havens, with more on the way. Work with local businesses - especially in VAWG hotspot areas has led to 101 venues signing the Women's Night Safety Charter.

The council also shares regular safety information with residents, businesses and visitors, including a community safety newsletter sent to more than 73,000 subscribers and updates through the Metropolitan Police Service's

new MET Engage platform.

Southwark's Community Safety Partnership brings together the council, police, fire service, probation and health partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. The partnership uses real time information so agencies can respond quickly to issues as they arise.

New Town Centre Police Teams in Peckham and North Walworth are working closely with the council to tackle ongoing problems such as robbery, antisocial behaviour and theft. Mobile phone theft remains the most common crime, and the council supports prevention through campaigns such as Look Up, Look Out; Operation Ringtone, and Our Routes.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES MCASH

Could the leader set out what steps are the council taking to ensure that trans women and trans men feel safe and welcome in council spaces?

RESPONSE

Southwark has one of the largest LGBTQ+ communities in the country, and according to the 2021 census, neighbourhoods in our borough are home to the highest proportion of trans people in England. This is why I am absolutely committed to ensuring that trans people feel safe and welcome in Southwark and have fair and equal access to all our services and spaces.

We recognise that conversations about facilities, inclusion and safety can be sensitive, and we want to reassure our community that we approach this work with care, empathy and transparency. The Government has indicated that further guidance on how public bodies should approach these issues, in the form of a new code of practice, will be issued, but this has not yet been published. Like many local authorities across the country, we cannot pre-empt what that guidance will say. However, we also recognise that our residents expect clarity and leadership from us now.

For that reason, we have already begun a thorough review of all our services and facilities. This review will consider how any future policy may need to be shaped across a range of areas — including toilets, changing rooms and other services — and will draw on legal advice, detailed equalities needs impact analyses, comprehensive consultation with residents and staff and a thorough assessment of any investment required to adapt our facilities. At the core of this review, I will ensure that all residents, including our trans community, feel safe and welcome everywhere the council operates.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MAGGIE BROWNING

What is the council doing to ensure children are safe outside schools at pick up and drop off time right across our borough?

RESPONSE

Over the last four years, we have made significant strides in improving safety outside schools during pick-up and drop-off times. Our School Streets programme has been at the heart of that change. Limiting motor vehicle access at busy times has created safer, healthier environments for children and families.

We've already rolled out 32 School Streets, restricting vehicle access at the busiest times, and we're committed to ensuring every school has a School Street or equivalent safety improvements by 2030. We are also proud to have 51 staffed school crossings across the borough, which support safe crossing, help manage congestion at school entrances, encourage walking and contribute to children's understanding of road safety.

Our parking enforcement team is also deployed to 40 priority schools every day at drop off and pick up time to keep traffic moving safely and to protect the space around school entrances.

In short: we're not just talking about safety — we are delivering it.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR RACHEL BENTLEY

Following various major works and other estates scandals, and the unceremonious removal of Open Communities from the Chilton Grove estate without their consultation, it has been reported that Open Communities may now be withdrawing across Southwark. Can the leader explain why, and outline how the council will ensure tenants and leaseholders are meaningfully engaged with going forward?

RESPONSE

Our priority is making sure tenants and leaseholders are properly heard, respected, and meaningfully shaping decisions that affect their homes. That is exactly what our new Resident Engagement Strategy was designed to deliver, supported by our newly established engagement team.

One of the most important changes we've made is the creation of the Major Works Residents Board. For the first time, residents themselves, elected by their peers, now have a formal role in scrutinising how major works are planned, commissioned and delivered. This includes being directly involved in selecting major works contractors and monitoring progress right through to completion. This is resident-led accountability in action.

We are clear, however, that the transition away from Open Communities was not communicated as early or as clearly as it should have been. We've listened to residents' feedback on this, and we have learned from it.

As part of our improved approach, every Planned Maintenance project now has a dedicated Customer Relations Officer. This person acts as the single,

named point of contact between residents, the council and the site team. This will make the process simpler, more personal and more responsive. Their job is to make sure every enquiry, concern or complaint is logged, investigated, followed up and resolved.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR SAM FOSTER

Could the Leader provide an update on the progress on the pension divestment from conflict and genocide announced in September 2025, including the work with London Collective Investment Vehicle (LCIV), the conversations with BlackRock and Legal & General Investment Management (LGIM), and the finalisation of the Exclusions Framework?

RESPONSE

We believe that all people have the fundamental right to a life free of persecution and free from the threat of genocide, ethnic cleansing and war. We recognise that our actions and investment are powerful tools in preserving the dignity and sanctity of human life and are committed to ensuring that we invest our residents' money and our employees' pensions in a manner that reflects our shared values.

As such, since the Leader's statement in September 2025, Southwark Pension Fund officers have developed an Exclusions Framework incorporating principles of the UN Genocide Convention as well as a provision to exclude companies in any list published by the UN in relation to human rights violations. The Exclusions Framework was discussed and agreed at the Pensions Advisory Panel (PAP) meeting in December 2025. Following this, officers have revised the Fund's Responsible Investment Policy ('RI Policy') to incorporate the Exclusions Framework. The revised RI Policy was agreed at the PAP meeting on 5 March 2026.

As part of the RI Policy, we have set out our approach to applying London CIV's RI matrix to our Fund's objectives and commitments. We have indicated our preference to include the most stringent exclusions, including for defence companies and companies on the UN List. Our preferences have included exclusions for companies breaching global human rights standards. Officers are in ongoing discussions with both LGIM and BlackRock in conjunction with LCIV to ensure requirements of our RI Policy are embedded in their product offerings at the earliest possible opportunity. In the meantime, officers continue to proactively monitor the exposure to companies in the UN List across the portfolio.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CHARLIE SMITH

Can the Leader tell me how much the council has invested in our Leisure Centres over the past 4 years?

RESPONSE

We have invested £26.7 million in our leisure centres over the last 4 years. The single biggest step forward has been bringing our leisure centres back into public hands. Insourcing has given us the freedom and flexibility to invest in improving facilities and expanding what's available to residents.

We've already invested £2.4 million to completely overhaul gym equipment in every centre, ensuring residents have access to high-quality, modern fitness equipment. We have also put £1.7 million into the brand-new Canada Water Leisure Centre, expanding opportunities in one of fastest-growing parts of the borough.

On top of this we have continued to invest to improve the centres we already had, carrying out repair works at the grade II listed Camberwell Centre, and refurbishing the Peckham Pulse spa, which is already delivering hundreds of thousands of pounds in savings while making our centres greener and more efficient.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON

The council has left the Albion Channel to degrade into a state where the only option has been to spend £425k of taxpayers' money and destroy wildlife habitats. Does the council support the Liberal Democrats' plans to invest in regular maintenance of our vital sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs)?

RESPONSE

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) play a critical role in London's nature recovery, with reedbed sites like Albion Channel being particularly effective for biodiversity gain. Until recently Albion Channel was managed annually. However, due to unexpected rapid growth, the reeds rooted in the channel bed have rendered our previous approach impossible.

The restoration works underway will improve habitats and bring ecological benefits to the waterway. The project is guided by an Ecological Impact Assessment, which found the proposals will have no long-term detrimental consequences for the ecology of the channel. We have taken several measures to mitigate the short-term impact on wildlife, including cutting back vegetation outside nesting season. The new planting will focus on supporting species like the reed warbler, and a new maintenance regime will mitigate undesired outcomes like slowing water growth and algae blooms.

Due to the dynamic nature of SINCS proper management requires constant oversight and review. A total review of the 56 council-managed SINCS is underway and we will look to target at risk sites with immediate interventions.

14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE ROSE

What is the council doing to protect our library services and make best use of our libraries to deliver vital services?

RESPONSE

Southwark Council has taken significant steps to protect and strengthen our much-loved library service.

We have invested £2 million to transform Brandon Library and Brandon Youth Centre into modern, welcoming and fully accessible spaces. We have continued to invest into further modernising our buildings, widening our offer, and ensuring our libraries remain safe, warm, and welcoming spaces at the heart of every neighbourhood.

We opened two brand new libraries, the Una Marson Library on the Aylesbury estate and Kingswood Library on the Kingswood estate. We have also expanded services across our whole library network including health and wellbeing initiatives, more events, coding clubs, and support for children, young people, and older residents. Our popular new service, the Library of Things, allows residents to borrow useful household items at low cost, reducing waste and supporting sustainable living.

Southwark's libraries are evolving, but their purpose remains the same: to give every resident a place to learn, create, seek support, and feel part of their community. We are proud of what has been achieved, including our libraries being named the London winner of the British Book Awards 2026 Library of the Year. This recognises the creativity and community spirit that defines our libraries, and we remain fully committed to protecting these vital public spaces for the long term.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR NAIMA ALI

Can the Leader provide an update on our work to support asylum seekers and refugees and maintain Southwark's Borough of Sanctuary status?

RESPONSE

Southwark is a borough in which everyone is welcome. We are proud of achieving Borough of Sanctuary status in June 2024, reaffirming our support of refugee and asylum-seeking communities. Since then, Southwark has moved from establishing the framework to delivering a mature, preventative and partnership-led model of support for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Our specialist resettlement support team has secured direct access into asylum hotels, enabling earlier engagement, built stronger relationships with the Home Office, and proactively helped people plan to move on from the hotels. This early intervention has significantly reduced crisis and

homelessness at the point refugee status is granted. Our Housing Surgery and Move-On Hub, delivered with Southwark Refugees Communities Forum, has brought housing, resettlement, and community organisations into one coordinated model.

We continue to support all resettlement pathways, including Homes for Ukraine, a no-cap approach to Afghan families, and the full completion of our Syrian resettlement programme. Our Experts by Experience panel ensures people with lived experience directly shape policy and service design.

Support for households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) continues as part of the councils' statutory responsibilities. Further, through our devolved, match funding partnership with United St Saviours, we have created a £600,000 Sanctuary Fund sustaining essential partners. Our schools also reflect this culture of welcome, with Surrey Square Primary School recently re-accredited as a School of Sanctuary.

Our widespread activity in this space, including constructive engagement with the UK Government, especially when we disagree, means that Southwark is recognised as a leading Borough of Sanctuary, with our Earned Settlement consultation response shared as an exemplar across London.

16. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR ADAM HOOD

Residents in Surrey Docks and across Southwark have experienced unacceptable heating outages, sometimes for months during the coldest time of the year. Despite council policy, residents are also not being paid compensation for this - despite paying for heating they are not getting and resorting to electric heaters at their own expense. Can the leader confirm that every resident will get the compensation they are entitled to?

RESPONSE

Resident feedback indicates that the majority of issues have now been resolved after ongoing remedial works, with additional improvements scheduled for the summer. As the entire estate was not impacted, only residents identified as affected will receive compensation; however, in instances where estate-wide outages exceeded 24 hours, all impacted individuals will be eligible for the council's £3 per day outage payment.

17. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID WATSON

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many residents are on the council's social housing waiting list?

RESPONSE

There are over 1.34 million households on local authority waiting lists across the country, revealing the enormity of the scale of the housing crisis

nationwide. In Southwark, there are 22,755 households on our waiting list. That is why we have done everything we can as an administration to deliver a record number of new social homes, year on year, often more than any other borough in the city. This is in no small part owing to the council's own building programme, which has 3,000 new council homes either built or on site.

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR REGINALD POPOOLA

Could the cabinet member set out the number of council owned properties that are currently classed as void and when we can reasonably expect the Housing department to meet their internal targets on turning over minor and major voids?

RESPONSE

The council currently has 833 properties classified as void (as of February 2026). We have reserviced and let 1,280 properties this financial year to date. Housing services are actively working to reduce this number of voids through an accelerated programme. This includes strengthening oversight of the void turnaround process, improving coordination between teams and mobilising additional contractors. Based on the current improvement plan and the strengthening of operational controls, the Housing Department expects to be meeting its internal turnaround targets by the end of the 2026/27 financial year.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL SITU

What has this council done in the past four years to expand access to healthcare for all residents in our borough?

RESPONSE

The council has worked very closely with NHS partners and local charities on access to healthcare for all residents in our borough. At the heart of this mission has been tackling health inequalities for our communities. Our Health on the High Street programme comprises digital health kiosks and community health outreach activities, conducted with the support of our network of 200 Community Health Ambassadors. We reach out to communities with the poorest health outcomes, and those who may not engage with traditional services.

The programme has delivered more than 3,150 face-to-face Vital 5 health checks, providing a structured assessment of blood pressure, weight, smoking, alcohol and mental health in trusted community spaces and in partnership with community organisations. Our Health on the High Street programme has also delivered over 46,000 digital health checks in libraries and leisure centre and over 150 local health events, sharing trusted health information in neighbourhoods across the borough. In the last 12 months the

health outreach teams have attended 200+ events and completed 3,941 face to face health checks, and almost 20,000 digital health checks.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS AND CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR RENATA HAMVAS

How much has this council invested since 2022 into making Southwark's parks some of the best in London?

RESPONSE

We know how important parks and open spaces are for residents' health, wellbeing and overall quality of life and how vital they are for biodiversity, cleaner air and a greener borough. That's why, since 2022, the council has invested more than £24 million to maintain, improve and future-proof Southwark's parks.

This investment is already delivering real results. We've created new community gardening spaces including refurbished polytunnels in Burgess Park, where seeds are grown for gardening groups across the borough. We've also redeveloped the sports centre in Burgess Park and upgraded outdoor gyms in Peckham Rye Park, Burgess Park and Dulwich Park, with a brand new outdoor gym coming soon to Southwark Park.

Together, these improvements are helping make Southwark's parks some of the best and most loved in London.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

Can the cabinet member update me on Southwark's national-leading Securing the Future of Council Homes campaign?

RESPONSE

Our Securing the Future of Council Homes campaign has been highly successful since its launch two years ago, bringing together over 100 English councils in a genuinely cross-party effort to change national policy.

So far, we have won significant changes to protect council housing including major reforms on right to buy, which has led to the loss of 2 million council homes nationally since the 1980s, and we've won a 10-year rent settlement to make sure there is funding to pay for much-needed investment and new homes.

This month, our campaign held its third summit – chaired by our partner Leeds City Council, and attended by more than 200 delegates. We have had successful engagement with the Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government, who has committed to work with the sector to understand the pressures on the housing revenue account. We will keep working with our

partner council and government to secure the future of council homes for current and future generations in our country.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR NICK JOHNSON

Canada Water Masterplan has been reduced to just 3% affordable housing, and the decision making has now been taken out of local hands, with Sadiq Khan likely to approve the application. Does the Cabinet Member believe the council is being tough enough on developers from the outset to ensure that they follow through on their promises to residents to deliver the affordable housing we need in Southwark?

RESPONSE

We have a clear policy in the Southwark Plan (2022) which sets the expectation for a minimum of 35% affordable housing subject to viability from the outset.

3% affordable housing has not been agreed at Canada Water by the council, nor the GLA.

All residential developments across London have been affected by the perfect storm of slow sales rates and stagnant values, high build cost inflation, increased regulation and increased borrowing cost.

Despite these challenges, we have one of the best records in London for delivering affordable housing. The most recent figures from the GLA – for 2024/25 - show that more homes for social rent were completed in Southwark than in any other London borough that year.

We have a long track record of working successfully with developers to deliver affordable housing but will also stand up to protect affordable housing – as with the Aylesham Centre proposal in Peckham, where we have argued at a planning inquiry that the proposal does not prioritise affordable housing in the way it should, and we await the Planning Inspectorate's decision.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY, JOBS AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

In November 2024, we asked a member's question about the empty former nursery at Tadworth House. Can the cabinet member confirm whether it is still empty, and what steps have been taken to bring this potential resource back into productive use?

RESPONSE FROM CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES

Since its closure, the property has been inspected by our Repairs Team. Their assessment confirmed that the building is in poor condition and would require significant investment and resources to bring it back into use.

The Hidden Homes team are now exploring a range of options to determine how best to bring this asset back into productive use. This includes assessing whether it is viable for refurbishment, repurposing, or redevelopment, in line with the needs of the estate and wider housing priorities.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR SAM DALTON

Can the Lead Member update me on the investment we are putting back into our local communities through taxes on big developers?

RESPONSE

I am pleased to confirm that by the end of this month, the council will have allocated over £20.6m to much needed community projects. Following Cabinet in September 2024, ward members have agreed local priorities in line with Southwark 2030 priorities and a number of projects are underway. The allocations made include £6m to the voluntary and community sector for investment in their buildings, £2.4m on council housing estates, £1.4m on play areas, £4.3m on parks and open spaces, £290,000 on projects addressing the climate emergency, £2.7m on Streets for People and £1.5m on community halls. This is a clear example of investing funding generated through the growth of the borough to benefit local communities.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

Can the Lead Member update me on plans to build brand new social rent homes on the Old Kent Road?

RESPONSE

Old Kent Road is one of the biggest opportunity areas in London for new development, and Southwark are doing everything we can to ensure we make the best use of this opportunity to deliver the housing that our residents need.

There are currently 3,441 homes under construction and recently completed in the Old Kent Road opportunity area. 63% of these are affordable homes. Over 1,400 of these (42%) are social rented homes.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY, JOBS AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS

What has the council done to ensure our residents can walk and wheel safely right across our borough?

RESPONSE

Improving the experience of walking and wheeling is at the heart of our Streets for People programme, which will transform the way people move around Southwark.

We are expanding cycling access by introducing 158 new cycle hire docking points and a borough-wide voucher scheme to make cycling more affordable. We have a growing network of second-hand bike markets who work with local residents, increasing opportunities for everyone to own a bike and be able to cycle around the borough. We have built 2.5km of new segregated cycle lanes since 2022 and supported over 7,500 children and 4,000 adults to gain confidence cycling safely through our bikability, cycle confident, and TfL's Cycling Skills Course.

We are also giving streets back to pedestrians. Our new walking grid is already helping us pinpoint exactly where improvements are most needed. Over the last four years, we have implemented 106 new pedestrian crossings – each opening up safer routes to schools, shops, parks and public transport – making everyday travel simpler and more enjoyable for our residents.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY, JOBS AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR MARIA LINFORTH-HALL

Despite inheriting the portfolio recently due to a Labour Cabinet Member's defection, will the Cabinet Member commit to standing up for St George's Ward residents who live around the Lambeth council-led Kennington Triangle scheme, which has been poorly communicated and consulted on due to Southwark Labour's negligence?

RESPONSE

We are working hard to ensure the voices of Southwark residents are considered by Lambeth in their design of the Kennington Triangle traffic scheme. Many residents on the border are understandably concerned about traffic displacement which could be caused by this scheme, specifically on narrow roads like Oswin or Hayles Street. Southwark officers have been working closely with Lambeth, including in a number of joint meetings, where residents' concerns have been shared directly and we have pushed for alternatives. In response Lambeth have developed a range of new options, and our Highways design officers have requested more data so we can assess the proposals. We will continue to collaborate on this, and ensure that when designs are ready, they are shared with St George's councillors, and residents on potentially affected streets.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR HAMISH MCCALLUM

Residents of Shad Thames are increasingly concerned about the impact that the rising number of licensed premises will have on the character of the conservation area. Will the leader support their request to introduce a Cumulative Impact Zone to incorporate Shad Thames, and ensure that a more balanced approach to licensing decisions is taken?

RESPONSE

The introduction of a Cumulative Impact Area (CIA) must be evidence led and implemented through the council's Statement of Licensing Policy, in line with national guidance.

Southwark's current CIAs are in Borough and Bankside, Camberwell, and Peckham. The council is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Cumulative Impact Policy, including a borough wide assessment to identify areas where evidential data demonstrates cumulative impact concerns and where special policy designations can be justified across Southwark. A report will be presented to the Licensing Committee in June 2026 for their consideration.

The council supports a balanced and proportionate approach. This includes ongoing monitoring of licensing activity, complaints, and enforcement data across the borough while working closely with ward councillors and residents. Residents are encouraged to continue reporting issues and engaging in the licensing process, as their evidence forms a vital part of how cumulative impact is assessed and addressed.

29. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY, JOBS AND TRANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

What has the council done to support residents into employment since 2022?

RESPONSE

In 2022, we set ourselves an ambitious goal: to support 2,500 Southwark residents from our priority groups into good, secure jobs. These include residents with physical or mental health conditions, vulnerable young people — including those with SEND or leaving care — and people balancing work with caring responsibilities.

I'm proud to say we exceeded this target. Since 2022, more than 2,900 residents have been supported into employment. That's thousands of lives changed, families strengthened, and futures opened up.

A huge part of this success is our Southwark Works programme, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025. It is our trusted and targeted frontline employment service deeply rooted in community. With a dedicated Southwark Works hub on Walworth Road and our new Connect to Work Hub in Peckham, residents now have more places than ever to get personalised support.

We've backed this work with serious investment: over £1 million in skills, training and long-term support during this administration. That funding has helped us build strong partnerships with local employers and education providers, and create welcoming spaces where residents can get the tailored help they need to succeed.

This is what a Labour administration delivers: investment that lasts, services that work, and opportunities that genuinely change lives.

30. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS AND CULTURE FROM COUNCILLOR VICTORIA MILLS

I would like to welcome the investment in refurbishing the main toilets at Peckham Rye Park. This is a much-needed improvement to one of Southwark's flagship parks, and I know it will be appreciated by local residents and visitors alike. With the contractor handover to the council confirmed as the end of April, could the Cabinet Member please confirm:

- What date will the toilets re-open to the public?
- Whether the refurbished toilets will include baby changing facilities?
- Given that the park is already extremely busy as the weather improves, and that currently the café toilets are the only public provision available, what steps are being taken to ensure that the public toilets within the playroom/changing rooms building are reopened as soon as possible to relieve pressure?

RESPONSE

The improvements of the toilets in Peckham Rye Park is part of our almost £18 million investment into our parks, playgrounds and green spaces across the borough.

We began work on the park toilets at the start of March and are on track to have the refurbishment completed by the end of April. The building will be open to the public after work is completed. The installation of a baby changing facilities is included in the building work, located in the accessible toilet. The public toilets at the playrooms/changing rooms are open and we are actively pursuing repairs to the disabled cubicle and handwash basins; we hope this will be completed and fully operational by the end of March.