

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 2022

RESPONSES TO MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR NATASHA ENNIN

Does the Leader agree that the government is failing to take the action needed to support local people through the cost of living crisis? How many people does the Council expect will remain impacted by ever-growing inflation?

RESPONSE

The government's response to the cost of living crisis has not only been woeful, but between their tax increases and benefits cuts, will almost certainly make things worse for families in the long term. This is especially true since all Southwark households will continue to see worsening impacts of the crisis including rising energy prices this winter.

With double-digit inflation alongside soaring energy prices, every single household in the borough and many of those on average earnings will face a big hit to their living standards this year.

But it is the tens of thousands of residents on the lowest incomes who will be most affected - those who cannot absorb the impact of energy bills of £250 a month next winter within their household budgets, and are potentially confronted with a stark choice between eating, keeping the heating on, or paying their rent or other priority bills later this year.

For many of the twenty four thousand Southwark households reliant on Universal Credit (UC), the effect of the Government package of support does no more than return their income to the level of a year ago before the Government removed the £20 a week uplift and before the cost of living crisis emerged.

In the seven months since the UC uplift was withdrawn and the statutory energy price cap started to rise in October last year, the Council has seen the number of awards and value of help provided through its local welfare assistance scheme (Southwark Emergency Support Scheme - SESS) increase by almost 100% compared with the seven months up to October 2021. Over the same period, rent arrears have risen among council tenants and monthly council tax collection has come under severe pressure as more households struggle to pay priority bills.

Those households reliant on UC will be much worse off this winter in real terms than they were twelve months ago. In 2019, before the pandemic and Cost of Living crisis, the charity National Energy Action found that eleven and a half thousand – or almost one in ten – Southwark households were living in fuel poverty. Sadly that number is set to increase this winter.

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

Construction on Antony and Roderick House has caused immense difficulties for residents who have suffered with resultant floods and damage to their properties. How will the council ensure that their rooftop developments on Thaxted Court and Damory House, in the nearby Abbeyfield Estate, do not cause similar issues?

RESPONSE

This week, residents of Thaxted Court and Damory House have received written confirmation that the rooftop homes development on their blocks will not be proceeding.

As we set out in our recent manifesto, we will be working closely with residents to deliver estate-wide improvements to Abbeyfield as a whole and ensure that residents of Thaxted and Damory are fully involved in any plans going forward.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES

Can the Leader provide an update on work to upgrade the Ledbury Estate and when work will commence on site to build much needed new council homes for residents?

RESPONSE

In June the Ledbury planning application was presented at planning committee and a resolution to grant planning was received. Tenders are to be issued for demolition and main contractors this month with a view to commencing demolition of Bromyard House in October 2022 and commencing the main works in March 2023.

The Ledbury redevelopment will replace Bromyard House with 333 homes. After new homes are built to replace the council homes in the towers that are demolished, half of the additional homes built will be available as council homes at council rents. We have guaranteed a new home for every permanent tenant, leaseholder and former tenants with a right to return. We have made a commitment to quality and so all new homes will be built to the latest standards as set out in current Building Regulations, planning policy and Southwark New Homes Design Guide. All homes will be energy efficient with residents having all year round heating that they control. Our plans will enable us to tackle overcrowding and help us find the right sized homes for residents.

The residents are actively engaged with every stage of the regeneration process. They have been able to provide informed comments on the design development and as a result, internal layouts of flats have been designed so that residents will have the option of either an open plan kitchen living area or separate kitchen and living spaces; they have influenced the look of the external walls and windows, the configuration of the estate layout, and the new community hall fit out. They have discussed with the design team their existing concerns about safety and security for all ages using the estate, and these have been addressed in the design that has been produced for planning and has now been further developed for the tender stage.

The residents of Ledbury estate have been actively involved since the outset of the development. There has always been a resident tenants and residents association (TRA) but they have specifically formed two teams, (albeit most participate in both) a Resident Project Group (RPG) focussing mainly on the general estate issues and management including an overview of the regeneration and tender processes, and the Resident Design Group (RDG) who provide an overview on design matters to the RPG and are proactively engaged with the regeneration design at all levels. Both groups meet monthly with additional interim design workshops, visits to other estates and community centres to become more informed on the design issues. These workshops have been well attended by the residents.

Once the residents found out about the planning process, they were keen to be involved and to show their support for the development. They also drafted and submitted their own joint letter of support during the consultation phase. The residents were involved with the architect selection process and this involvement is continuing through the tender process. Currently they are considering a question to be put to contractors that will need to be addressed in the tender returns, with assistance from their Independent Tenant Advisor and the project team.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID WATSON

Of the 2,500 council homes that Southwark pledged to start or build by May 2022, could you provide estimated completion dates, by project, of those not yet finished? How many council homes is the council scheduled to build in the 2022/23 financial year? Of the 1,000 more council homes pledged by 2026, how many will be built by 2026?

RESPONSE

In 2018, we promised to build or start building 2,500 council homes by May 2022. This was a hugely ambitious target, and I am delighted that we delivered on it.

There are currently 44 sites across the borough where we are building these new council homes. As I'm sure colleagues will be aware, these building projects take time and the practical completion dates for these sites ranges from the end of this week, to the second half of 2025. The majority of these homes will be ready by the end of 2023.

In addition to these sites, it is projected that 343 new further homes will commence in 2022/23. These will be a part of the 1,000 new additional homes that will be started on site in the period from April 2022 until April 2026, which was a commitment from our 2022 manifesto.

Council homes are vital in tackling the housing crisis. I am incredibly proud of our outstanding council housing building programme and this Labour council will continue to build the housing our residents need.

Building council homes is also a crucial part of our 10-point plan to tackle the cost of living crisis, as we know how much of a difference secure housing can make to the quality of people's lives. This is why we have delivered in such bold commitments over the last several years. This stands in stark contrast to the Southwark Liberal Democrat pledges from earlier this year that made no firm commitment on council housing building numbers at all.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR JASON OCHERE

How many new care units will Camberwell Lodge deliver, and how many more are needed over the coming years to meet demand?

RESPONSE

The new Camberwell Lodge Nursing home brings to life the council's commitment to open new good quality nursing homes in Southwark. I was immensely proud to open our state-of-the-art nursing home in the heart of the borough which will enable people with care needs to stay within their communities, close to their families and loved ones, and to receive high quality care.

Camberwell Lodge will accommodate 98 residents, which is a significant increase from 60 prior to redevelopment. They offer a mix of nursing care and residential care. We are contracted to purchase all the nursing care (52 rooms).

All rooms come with private en-suite walk-in shower rooms. There are numerous communal lounge and dining areas, roof terrace and themed activity spaces.

This is further strengthened by the council's Residential Care Charter, which will drive up standards for care workers in all residential care homes within Southwark, including the Camberwell Lodge, leading to better working conditions and better quality of care for the most vulnerable residents within the community.

In the coming years, we need about 40 additional places going forward. Officers across Children's and Adults' Services and Sustainable Growth are reviewing the options for opening an additional nursing home in the borough.

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

With transphobia on the rise across the UK and in Southwark, it is more important than ever that Southwark council is a visible ally to the transgender community. Sadly members of the Cabinet refused to confirm trans rights are human rights during the recent local election campaign. Southwark's 'Transgender and Gender Identity Guidance' outlines that "where possible, the Council will aim to have gender neutral facilities in addition to existing single sex facilities." What plans does the council have to install accessible gender neutral facilities in Tooley Street and all other council facilities? Will the Council also commit to introducing the TUC best practice on "How to be a good trans ally at work"?

RESPONSE

Trans rights are human rights.

This is not a slogan to be used as a political football; it is true by definition. It is about ensuring that trans men and trans women are accorded the same dignity, respect and safety that we would expect for every colleague and every resident in this borough and across the country.

This is especially crucial at a time when the trans community is experiencing seemingly unprecedented and growing prejudice and discrimination. It is worth reminding ourselves that this small portion of the population experiences disturbingly high levels of abuse and bigotry. One in four trans people have experienced homelessness. More than a quarter have faced domestic abuse. One in eight have been physically attacked at work, either by colleagues or customers. Almost half of trans people have considered taking their own life.

The council I lead will continue to be committed to creating an inclusive environment for transgender residents and employees.

Our Transgender and Gender Identity guidance was developed in partnership with a group of trans employees, representatives of the council's LGBTQ+ staff network, and trade union representatives. This guidance sets out the council's commitment to respecting the right of individuals to self-identify as male, female, or neither, and commits to recognising individuals as the gender they choose to present. Many of the principles and practical measures included in the council's guidance reflect the purpose and content of the TUC publication on how to be a good trans ally at work. Therefore, the council is already working to achieve the best practices identified by the TUC.

Almost half of all trans people report being uncomfortable about using public toilets. We know that gender neutral facilities are an important feature of trans-inclusive environments and they are already installed in council buildings across the borough. The Tooley Street office has gender neutral toilets on each floor and two of the council's Queens Road offices also already meet the gender neutral requirement, with work required to adapt facilities in Queens Road 1. Work is also under way to examine the possibility of converting or installing facilities in other council buildings in the borough. As part of this work we will

continue to engage with representatives from trades unions, the LGBTQ+ staff network and the women's network.

While it is right and important that we provide gender neutral facilities, we do also have a legal duty to provide separate rooms containing toilets for men and women. Toilets used by women must also be provided with facilities for disposing of sanitary products. This can be found within the 1992 Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations, under regulation 20.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR SARAH KING

Can the Leader explain what activities the council is planning for families to make this year's summer of play as successful as or more so than last year's?

RESPONSE

Building on the successes of last year's summer of play, there will be a wide range of activities and events on for children and families to enjoy over the summer in Southwark.

All council run youth centres and adventure play sites will offer a varied programme of activities across the summer holidays. In addition, the new Positive Futures for Young People Fund programme of commissioned youth activities went live in April 2022. These are 20 different services ranging from sports, arts and crafts, drama, cooking and healthy eating, to CV writing, budgeting and money management, mentoring, building confidence and more.

Officers across the Leisure team are working with organisations across the borough from arts groups to sports clubs, encouraging them to advertise their session via the digital hub (see below) and Southwark Presents platforms which will then be promoted ahead of and during the school holidays to ensure that parents and young people know what is on offer in their local area with particular emphasis on those session that are either free or low cost.

This summer, Southwark also has funded 39 providers who will be running 56 programmes across the borough over a 4-week period for the Summer of Food and Fun. The programme will be running from Monday 25 July to Friday 26 August, with a variety of clubs including sports camps, tenants and residents associations, family and children centres, and schools. The holiday programmes will include various enriching activities for vulnerable children including those who receive benefits-related free school meals and those with no recourse to public funds. All funded holiday providers are expected to provide at least one free, healthy and nutritious meal a day with all food (including snacks) meeting school food standards.

The aims of the programme are for young people who participate to eat more healthily and be more active during the school holidays, take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment, to be safe and not

to be socially isolated, to have greater knowledge of health and nutrition, and to be more engaged with school and other local services

During the Youth Review consultation young people fed back that it is difficult for them to find out things to do in their local area. As part of Southwark Council's Youth New Deal, officers have been working to develop a new digital information hub called One Hub where young people and families will find comprehensive, easy to navigate and up to date information about what youth related activities and services are available in their local area. Officers will ensure all council delivered (and funded) summer youth activities are listed on the new website and in addition third sector youth providers are also being encouraged to upload their summer events and activities into the new youth hub, A comprehensive publicity campaign, including in social media channels popular with young people, will follow to ensure young people and families are aware of how to find the most up to date information.

Additional to the Summer of Play there is also a Summer of Food and Fun programme aimed at families with children age 4-16 who are eligible for free school meals.

- £1.5 million of grant funding from the department for education to Southwark Council to run the 2022 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme and funding has been confirmed until 2024/25
- £1.1 million for the summer provision across a 5-week holiday period. 39 holiday club providers have been recommended for funding to run 56 programmes across the borough. The programme aims to reach over 2,500 children over the summer.

Activities

- Each of the clubs will offer a range of activities, some specialising in particular sports like football or tennis.
- Clubs will all have access to a choice of cultural activities for the children to engage in, connecting with local theatres and cultural providers.
- Many clubs also take children on trips outside of their local neighbourhood.

Take-and-Make boxes

- Throughout the summer holidays, over 5,000 boxes will be distributed.
- Vegetarian recipe boxes are distributed as a part of the Holiday Food and Fun programme. The boxes support families to learn about healthy eating and cook nutritious meals together at home and include ingredients, recipes and videos.

Details on provision and applying for a place are on the Council website: www.southwark.gov.uk/foodandfun

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MARIA LINFORTH-HALL

How much has the council paid in total in compensation to its residents, since 2010, for communal heating or hot water outages that last more than 24 hours? What was the percentage of district heating availability for each council estate site in 2019, 2020 and 2021? How many district heating and hot water outages complaints did the council receive, by year, since 2010?

RESPONSE

As I have said before, I know every single moment of heating loss has a significant impact on our residents. We are always working to make continuous improvements to our heating system and high quality maintenance of our housing stock is a priority for this council. As a council we are committed to delivering good quality housing and our asset management strategy refresh that will come to cabinet this financial year will update our strategic vision for ensuring our housing stock is kept in good condition.

In 2010, our incoming Labour administration inherited one of the poorest standards of housing stock in London from the previous Liberal Democrat and Conservative administration. Only half of council homes met the decent homes standard, with 18,000 homes in disrepair. By 2020 Southwark's Labour-run council had nearly doubled this number with 95% of homes meeting the decent homes standard. These improvements were carried out against the backdrop of having to plug the £600m gap in our housing budget that Labour was left with by the Liberal Democrat and Conservative administration that came before.

The council has paid an average of £77,241 in compensation each year since 2010. In recent years, we have reduced outages significantly, reducing the compensation needing to be paid by over half.

Across our 94 estates with district heating the average availability was as follows, 2019 – 97%, 2020 – 99.4%, 2021 – 99.6%.

Complaints record retention is 6 years + current financial year so we hold 1 April 2016 onwards only. In that period we have received an average of 408 complaints per year. We take this issue extremely seriously, hence why we ensure that compensation is paid to residents and endeavour to fix the issues as quickly as possible.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR SUNNY LAMBE

How is the Council facilitating partnership working in order to meet the requirements of becoming a Right to Food borough?

RESPONSE

Taking a 'Right to Food Borough' approach is an ambition of the Council and is supported by the borough's food partnership, Southwark Food Action Alliance

(SFAA) which has over 130 members, including emergency food providers, community food organisations, food growing organisations, housing representatives, faith groups and businesses. Discussions are taking place on how best to take this forward, and a mapping exercise is currently underway.

The Council will first announce its support for the Right to Food Borough with a letter lobbying the government to enshrine the right to food in law. SFAA members were briefed on the Right to Food Borough at a network meeting on 29 June 2022 and were supportive of this move. The attendees of that in-person meeting represented the following organisations, and engagement of the wider membership will continue to be ongoing:

- Albrighton Fridge
- Copleston Centre
- Felix Project
- Food2You (Age UK)
- Freelance researcher
- Funnel Food Bank Support
- Inspire at St Peters
- L&Q placemakers
- Lewington Community Food Bank
- Mercato Metropolitano
- Paxton Timebank and Pantry
- Pecan
- Pembroke House
- S.L.U.G. (urban gardeners)
- South London Mission
- Southwark Council
- Spring Community Hub
- Together Southwark (Anglican Church)

We continue to work in partnership with national food advocacy group Sustain who helped us develop the borough's first Food Security strategy. They have since published guidance in September 2021 recommending actions that councils can take at a local level to bring residents closer to benefiting from the Right To Food.

Sustain recommends that these actions are developed in consultation with residents who have personal experience of food insecurity. Our voluntary and community sector (VCS) partner PECAN (hosting the SFAA) is setting up an advisory panel of people with experience of food insecurity which will make it easier for them to input and shape food security proposals including on the Right to Food.

The Sustain guidance actions fall under four areas:

- Children's food
- Healthy food neighbourhoods and physical access to food
- Cash first approaches

- Food for older and disabled people

We have many existing partnerships to build on including with businesses, NHS partners, the department for work and pensions, VCS stakeholders and a variety of council departments including planning, local economy, housing, benefits advice, parks, and services for vulnerable people.

Specific examples of successful partnerships to date include work with:

- Food banks such as Southwark Food Bank and Spring Community Hub: to improve dignity and signposting upstream support
- Independent Food Aid Network, DWP and Citizens Advice: development of signposting resources to support a cash first approach
- Over 40 community organisations including Burgess Sports, Millwall Community Trust, tenants and residents associations, faith groups, schools, youth services: as part of the Holiday Food and Fun programme supporting approximately 2500 families each holiday period
- Bestway (cash and carry) and Impact on Urban Health: to improve the availability of affordable healthy options on offer at convenience stores.

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

What measures will the council take to ensure that cultural heritage in the borough, notably the extensive Roman mosaics and other archaeological treasures found at the Landmark Square development, will be preserved and put on display in Southwark for residents and visitors to see?

RESPONSE

Southwark is a borough steeped in historic and cultural heritage and we are proud to be home to many important heritage assets across the borough.

The council takes its role as the custodian of the historic environment very seriously. Southwark has stated its vision is to preserve, conserve, celebrate and enhance Southwark's unique, but also fragile and irreplaceable historic environment. The Heritage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) plays a vital part in designing a heritage strategy for Southwark that identifies what people value about their heritage and how it plays an active role in community life. The council welcomes proposals from the local community for locally listed buildings, in line with the criteria set out in the Heritage SPD.

This Labour administration will always seek to support the preservation of such finds and ensure that they remain in borough and on display for everyone to benefit.

The council has been able to open the Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library at a time that other local authorities are reducing their commitment to funding heritage projects.

The planning application related to this site (19/AP/0830) contains a number of conditions related to the preservation and presentation of artefacts discovered in the course of the development.

In discussions with the planning officer the council feels these conditions are suitable to secure the display of the Roman mosaics and other significant elements excavated at Landmark Court in Southwark.

The archaeology officer has discussed the display of the two mosaic pavements with the applicants and their archaeologists. The mosaics have been lifted and packed by specialist conservators and are in store at Museum of London Archaeology's office.

Aspects of the display of the mosaics and other elements of interest from the site are ongoing with the applicant's archaeological team from Museum of London Archaeology.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR LAURA JOHNSON

What progress has the Council made in securing a permanent home for the LGBTQ+ centre, and what arrangements are being made in the mean time?

RESPONSE

The council has secured a commitment from Native Land to provide a permanent LGBTQ+ cultural space within the railway arches that form part of the Bankside Yards development on Blackfriars Road. A panel comprising representatives from the LGBTQ+ community, the council, GLA, and the developer is being formed to select an operator of the space.

The preferred operator is to provide a broad range of benefits to the LGBTQ+ community including the following: An inclusive, safe place to meet/socialise, promoting both cultural and wellbeing activities including exhibitions, events, workshops, support and advice to the most vulnerable members of the community.

Following a marketing exercise and community engagement exercise, the panel will assess the proposals based on the following evaluation criteria:

- a. Strategic benefit to LGBTQ+ community
- b. Local community benefits
- c. Social value
- d. Sustainability of business model, references and business plan
- e. Acceptable financial standing taking account of the proposed rent and fit out proposals (including budget and funding).

The current programme anticipates that an operator will be selected by the end of the current financial year. It is likely that the facility will open during 2024/25 although the exact timing will depend on the selected operator's plans for the fit out of the space.

In the meantime, we are delighted to have agreed a new five year lease with the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre to remain at Bankside following their successful pop-up at Hopton Street in order for them to continue providing essential services, support and social events in this much needed community space.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Southwark council tenants are hard pressed at the moment. How much of their rent money has been spent on the 'Great Estates Programme' in each ward? How much did the council spend on the great estates programme each financial year? How much of its budget did the council allocate to the great estate programme each financial year?

RESPONSE

In 2018 this administration committed to the creation of a Great Estates guarantee to ensure that residents can be involved in making the improvements to their estates that matter most to them. The focus of the pilot programme was to deliver resident led and co-designed estate improvements. Seven estates are part of the pilot programme. Some of the larger estates have more than one TRA. The following TRAs have been part of the programme:

- Brandon 1, 2 and 3
- Brandon - Conant & Rutley
- Canada
- Elmington
- Friary
- Friary, Northfield House
- Kingswood
- Rockingham
- Rye Hill
- Unwin

The following table provides the current spend by ward:

Ward	Totals	
Chaucer	£	217,621
Dulwich Wood	£	188,391
Newington	£	808,401
Old Kent Road	£	338,620
Peckham Rye	£	28,931
Rotherhithe	£	42,615
St Giles and Camberwell Green	£	497,947

The priorities on each estate were determined by residents. This will in part determine the level of spend as will the number of estate homes in each ward.

The following table shows the spend over financial years:

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Amount (£)	201,166	337,137	999,351	584,871

Note that funding has been carried forward into 2022-23. Some projects are still underway, the tables only show spend to date.

In addition to the above, £250,000 has been provided from the Great Estate budget to deliver allotments and gardening schemes.

£970,000 per annum has been provided over a 3 year period.

We have also worked with external partners to add value to projects, supported grant bids, and have asked our larger contractors to provide additional social value resulting in additional in-kind support. This has resulted in many tens of thousands of pounds of value being added to the programme. The programme has been received very positively by residents. We are currently formally evaluating the programme, and considering how best to mainstream the learning.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ELLIE CUMBO

Following refugee week in June, what is the Council doing to support Ukrainian, Afghan, Syrian and other refugees trying to settle in the borough as part of its commitments as a Borough of Sanctuary?

RESPONSE

We remain fully committed to welcoming and supporting refugees to Southwark.

As part of its commitments as a Borough of Sanctuary, Southwark is providing essential resettlement support directly to Ukrainian, Afghan and Syrian refugees.

Ukrainian Resettlement

The Council is coordinating the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. There are currently 543 Ukrainian guests that have been matched to 299 Southwark based hosts under this Scheme. The Council has been undertaking safeguarding and suitability checks and providing support to guests and hosts involved within the Scheme. So far 245 guests have already arrived in Southwark and are being supported by dedicated resettlement workers to settle into the community.

Afghan Resettlement

The Council has been providing wrap around support to Afghan evacuees placed in two Home Office Bridging Hotels in Southwark since September 2021. Families are receiving support to access key services and build on the skills and knowledge they need to resettle into the UK while they await moving into longer

term accommodation. So far, 254 individuals have been supported under this Scheme.

The Council is also supporting one family that has been resettled in Southwark under the Government's Afghan Resettlement Scheme (which brings together the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and eligible British Nationals). Work is also under way to resettle a second family under this Scheme.

Syrian Resettlement

The Council is currently supporting four Syrian families under the Government's Syrian Resettlement Scheme (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme). Families are being supported by dedicated workers to resettle and rebuild their lives in the UK.

The Council is also supporting three community based sponsorship projects that are supporting Syrian families to resettle in Southwark.

Alongside the provision of direct support, the Council is working with key stakeholders including statutory and voluntary sector partners in responding to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. This include the provision of funding as well as the development of a multiagency forum to bring together the work of various agencies.

The multiagency forum will work with the council to develop a borough of sanctuary action plan on how we will work together to build on the work done so far.

The Council is undertaking a comprehensive needs assessment of the refugee, asylum seeker and vulnerable migrant population within Southwark. This will help to inform the Council's ongoing response to this population.

The Council will continue to urge the Government to take concrete action to transform the UK's asylum system to ensure that it is fair and humane and continue to campaign against the Conservative government's hostile environment.

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

In an amendment submitted to the Council Assembly in March of this year, Labour claimed to have allocated "£3m to fund improvement works to South Docks Marina". Can the council provide a full breakdown of how this money has been allocated and/or spent? What improvement works have or will be funded and when were the funds allocated?

RESPONSE

Earlier this year a decision was taken to progress with essential works required to the South Dock Marina boatyard and as a result £3m of capital was allocated to the project in April 2022 for the improvements works. The current facilities at

the boatyard site are in need of improvement and repositioning within the boatyard boundary. The health and safety and improvement works to address these concerns comprises:

- Demolition of the existing facilities block and replace with a toilet and shower block and placed in a more suitable / safe access position
- Reposition the containers currently on site and create staircases / walkways to ensure compliance with building regulations and fire safety
- Upgrade of the electrics to both the boatyard and marina to better cope with the electrical demand on site
- Enhance the ground so it can take the structural load required of the boatyard

These essential works will improve the facilities on site whilst forming the foundation for the subsequent phases of work and future vision of the site as an excellent marina in the heart of London.

The project is currently in the planning stage and a detailed action plan is being developed.

Berth holders and boatyard business owners will be fully involved throughout the project.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR HAMISH MCCALLUM

Please detail the costs incurred by Southwark Council in defending the High Court claim (Case No: CO/3370/2021) for judicial review brought by an individual in May 2022 (itemise both the council's own costs and any costs awarded against the council)? Has the council now placed the individual and their family from this case into suitable accommodation? How many other households have the council found to be statutorily overcrowded but assessed as being caused by a "deliberate act" since 2010?

RESPONSE

This case concerned a challenge to the council's housing allocations scheme and the provisions within this policy relating to deliberate overcrowding. Households who are statutorily overcrowded are entitled to band 1, highest priority, on the council's housing register. The policy states that households who deliberately overcrowded themselves are not entitled to this level of priority. The Court found the council's Allocations policy was lawful and these provisions could be applied. It found however that the policy was wrongly applied on the facts to this case.

The council incurred £14,124 in legal costs, which includes the cost of in house legal charges and barristers' fees. It was agreed as part of the outcome of the case that the council would pay 90% of the claimant's agreed legal costs. Fees are currently being prepared by the claimant's legal representatives who will submit a bill of costs. This bill will be subject to assessment by the court if it is not agreed, so at this time the full costs are not known.

The council reassessed the application and awarded band 1 priority in light of the judgement. The priority was also backdated to the appropriate point. As a result the family successfully bid for a home that was advertised shortly after the judgement was issued. The family viewed and accepted the property shortly afterwards and have a confirmed tenancy start date of 4 July 2022.

Data relating to deliberate overcrowding is only available from 2018. The allocations policy which contains this provision was introduced in 2014, therefore between 2010 and 2014 there would be no relevant data because this provision did not exist during that time. The council has had a number of IT upgrades to the system since 2014 and only has data on this issue available from 2018.

During 2018/19 there were 20 requests for band 1 priority. 11 were rejected. The reason these requests were rejected was not recorded at that time.

Since 2019, 413 requests for band 1 priority as a result of statutory overcrowding have been made. 122 of these have been assessed and accepted and band 1 status awarded. 291 cases have been assessed and rejected. 247 of these cases were rejected because the assessment of space standards showed they were not in fact statutorily overcrowded. 44 cases were rejected on the basis of the deliberate act provisions. These households are all recorded as having moved into accommodation and been statutorily overcrowded from the outset.

16. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS

Councillors in Nunhead and Queen's Road and surrounding wards are extremely concerned to hear of proposals recently made by Transport for London (TfL) to cut the 78 and 12 bus routes entirely. Both of these bus routes are vital transport links to an area which needs more public transport options, not less. The Save Southwark Buses petition against these cuts is receiving massive support from local people, incensed by the proposals. Can the Cabinet Member inform us as to what action is being taken by Southwark Council to insist to TfL that these proposals do not proceed, in any form?

RESPONSE

The residents and local businesses in Nunhead and Queen's Road know all too well that these proposals are as a direct result of this Government, forcing TfL into this situation with a set of short term funding settlements and unrealistic demands. All these bus cuts can be prevented from occurring in any form by the Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps.

Since the opening of the TfL consultation, we have been carrying out detailed and comprehensive work to fully understand the impacts of these cuts on local areas and to comprehend the specific effect on local residents. It is clear that the cuts disproportionately impact on Southwark and on already disadvantaged communities with low levels of public transport accessibility. I would like to thank the local ward councillors in the Queen's Road, Nunhead and wider Peckham areas for their work in raising awareness of the consultation and ensuring that

the voices of local residents are heard. TfL tell us the level of response to this consultation is unprecedented and already in excess of 9,000 responses by the first week of July. This has led to an extension till 7 August 2022.

The communities served by the 78 and the 12 bus routes, Nunhead and Queens Road, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of these proposals and that is why we are opposing them in all forms. Affordable, accessible buses are not negotiable to Londoners.

This is evidenced by our own work through the Movement Plan and our transport equity framework. These areas need more public transport, not less. They need more buses and more step free accessible stations to form public transport interchanges that work for everyone.

The initial council response has been to provide clear information to residents, through a variety of channels, because we recognise that TfL's information provision was poor and not easily understood. This include impacts on specific areas with additional waiting times and interchanges required. Details can be found at:

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/transport-and-roads/buses-in-southwark-have-your-say>

This will also be combined with engagement through various channels and meetings with TfL officers, all councillors, residents, our neighbours in Lambeth and other London Councils.

We are intending to make available more information for residents to help make their case to TfL and to submit a full technical submission on behalf of the borough to TfL to formally evidence the council's position, particularly with respect to demonstrating how Southwark, including specific areas like Queen's Road and Nunhead, would be hugely disadvantaged by the proposals.

17. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

Does the Cabinet Member know what the next steps are for Transport for London's (TfL) central London bus review consultation, and can she inform me of any next steps for the Cabinet Member's campaign against these bus cuts?

RESPONSE

The most important next step is for the Secretary of State for Transport to provide a long term, fair funding settlement for Transport for London (TfL) and all Londoners that is fair and just. (The current interim financial package ran out on 13 July 2022.)

Our campaign has been led by residents, for residents and Southwark councillors have my sincere thanks in all the work they have done to raise awareness, engage with people on these and encourage participation in the TfL consultation. Residents understand very clearly the position the Government has forced upon London and the Mayor.

Thousands of people have also signed a number of local petitions, including the Save Southwark Buses petition, either online or at one of many local stalls that councillors have provided in recent weeks. This engagement work continues for the remainder of the consultation process and beyond.

Since the opening of the TfL consultation, we have been carrying out detailed and comprehensive work to better understand the impacts of these cuts on local areas and to comprehend the specific effect on local residents. It is clear that the cuts disproportionately impact on Southwark and on already disadvantaged communities.

The initial council response been to provide clear information to residents, through a variety of channels, because we recognise that TfL's information provision was poor and not easily understood. This will include impacts on specific areas with additional waiting times and interchanges required. Details can be found at:

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/transport-and-roads/buses-in-southwark-have-your-say>

As a result of feedback from councillors, the council will be doing more to ensure that hard to reach groups and those who are digitally excluded have access to the consultation and more information in good time. There are a number of events that we will support and attend for the remainder of July and early August. We are working with key advocacy groups including local unions supporting the workforce at the bus garages at Camberwell and all those whose jobs are impacted by these proposed cuts.

It will also be combined with engagement through various channels with TfL, all councillors, residents, our neighbours in Lambeth and London Councils.

We are intending to submit a full technical submission to TfL to formally evidence the council's position, particularly with respect to demonstrating how Southwark is hugely disadvantaged by the proposals.

The published timetable from TfL indicates November (or more likely now December with the extension of the consultation period until 7 August 2022) for internal TfL decisions and engagement with impacted boroughs following the public phase. TfL then envisage implementation in phases through 2023. The campaign to stop these cuts will continue at pace and with energy, until the Secretary of State for Transport provides the fair funding London deserves.

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN BATTESON

I understand that the Cabinet Member went to Oxford to explain how active travel measures have proven such a success in Southwark. Can the Cabinet Member explain the shared learning for the visit for both boroughs to create safe networks for active travel, including more walking, cycling, bus usage and public transport?

RESPONSE

I was kindly invited to visit Oxford by Oxfordshire Liveable Streets to participate in a public meeting to talk and discuss how local authorities are working to improve roads and streets: “Implementing Liveability”.

I would like to thank Scott Urban and Ella Sinclair for their kind hospitality during my brief stay.

I would also like to thank Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport, Oxford City Council and Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Highways, Oxfordshire County Council.

I also met with a number of other Oxford City Council councillors on a cross party basis.

- Oxford has a number of traffic interventions and city centre transport reforms in place and planned for delivery. These include a network of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.
- Traffic in Oxford is characterised by a city centre where pedestrians must be prioritised and the historic fabric, educational purpose and civic amenity must be protected.
- The city is surrounded by ring road and within and alongside it are significant suburban areas and residential communities with different socio-economic characteristics and demographics.
- Oxfordshire County Council is the highways authority for the city, under a two tier governance structure. Together with the City Council and the local bus companies, they are investing in over 150 new electric buses and implementing four new bus gates to prevent key routes being used by through traffic across the city. This traffic will be diverted to the ring road.
- It also has significant areas of new housing being built and land use changing to facilitate this.
- Similarly there are key economic growth corridors in relation to research and development, new technologies and manufacturing, green job creation and related education and sciences.
- The city and wider Oxfordshire has a dynamic and growing population that is increasingly diverse.
- It also has a significant independent sector of non-catchment schools close to the city centre, that provide a significant number of school places at both primary and secondary stages.

During my visit I spoke with local councillors about the work both the City and County Councils were doing to create healthier streets, improve and encourage

more active travel and ensure a public realm across all of Oxford that was cleaner, greener and fairer.

I believe that there is much shared learning and experience outside of London that we as an authority can benefit from. I have extended a reciprocal cross party invite to councillors from Oxford City and Oxford County Council, as well as colleagues from Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, to visit us here early next year.

Many changes have been delivered in a short space of time and we have learnt what went well and where we need to improve, not least on the communication of purpose and benefit to all our communities; especially the significance of making walking great again and the potential these changes have to enable more of the things residents tell us are priorities to them, to happen.

Therefore, it was rewarding that Southwark's experience, delivery and knowledge over recent years has become recognised by other authorities as valuable and that we are considered one of the leading local authorities in country for the delivery of "Implementing Liveability" to our streets.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR ADAM HOOD

As the cabinet member for parks, streets and clean air, it is your direct responsibility to "work with Transport for London (TfL) to reduce traffic on main roads and make bus journeys quicker and more reliable". The proposals of the Labour London Mayor, however, will ensure the exact opposite of this: reducing bus services and increasing traffic on our already polluted roads. In light of this, what will the cabinet member do to mitigate the negative effects of Labour's bus cuts? If these cuts proceed, how will the cabinet member meet their commitment to reducing traffic and making bus journeys quicker and more reliable?

RESPONSE

These bus cuts are a political choice, forced on TfL by the current Conservative government making an active political decision to run down our city and play politics with Londoners' lives. The Government has forced TfL into this situation with a set of short term funding settlements and unrealistic demands.

The council's formal response to the TfL proposals will be to highlight the disproportionate scale and impact on these proposals in Southwark and especially on certain vulnerable groups and areas within the borough.

The primary objective of the borough's Movement Plan remains to encourage more people to engage in active travel measures such as walking and cycling but recognising the important role of public transport.

By increasing the number of short journeys made by active travel, this will potentially reduce the number of vehicle trips on the network and ultimately

reduce car ownership, and maximise the potential for bus journeys to be quicker and more reliable.

We have been working with TfL on red route bus lane prioritisation schemes on their road network and additional enforcement measures within and alongside bus lanes on the roads that we manage.

We are also continuing to work with TfL and other key partners to improve road infrastructure, highways and carriageways with modal filters and bus gates, giving buses priority at key locations, most recently through our Streetspace measures.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR RACHEL BENTLEY

In light of multiple instances of residents having to water trees that should be cared for by the council and its contractors, how many times have contractors failed to meet the watering plan? How many trees that were planted in the 2021/22 season have already died from lack of watering? How is the council monitoring the health of the trees that it plants and ensuring that the watering plan is adhered to going forwards?

RESPONSE

The council is currently undertaking an extensive monitoring programme where we have identified an issue with one of the three planting contractors operating in the borough.

Results indicate in some cases between four and six contracted visits in April and May were either not attended or were inadequate. The contractor concerned has committed to provide additional resource in remediation. Southwark's Tree Team are also providing watering on an on-going basis targeting the trees most in need.

The full monitoring programme will be completed in September, however results in the northern areas of the borough indicate that approximately 30 trees have been confirmed as requiring intervention or replacement from over 400 inspected. We will ensure trees in poor condition receive additional attention and under the contract, contractors will replace any trees which have died within their three-yearly maintenance cycles at their own cost. Therefore there will be no loss of trees and no additional cost to the council.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR KATH WHITTAM

How many new parks will be created in Southwark over the next few years, what will they offer the whole community in terms of use, and how will this help the Council meet its net zero carbon targets?

RESPONSE

We are committed to protecting and investing in our parks in Southwark to ensure everyone has access to nature.

I am proud of our record of increasing the number of green park flags from 8 to 30 and that 86% of Southwark's sites of importance for nature conservation positively managed to improve their ecological value and ability to support biodiversity - the sixth highest rate in England.

Over the next few years, a new park will be created by British Land as part of the Canada Water development

- Over 1 hectare in size.
- Planning submission (reserved matters) is scheduled for later this year with start on site towards end of 2023/24 (subject to planning permission).
- Park due to be completed during 2025/26

Lendlease will be undertaking a further phase of delivering at Elephant Park in Elephant and Castle between 2022-26:

- Making the park 1 hectare in total
- Full complete and open to public in 2026/27.

Parks and Leisure Capital Programme team are delivering landscape improvement projects at 11 existing parks and open spaces in the borough between 2022 - 2024.

Projects are designed to enhance the ecological value of our open spaces by including features such as wildflower meadows, sustainable drainage systems, habitat creation, irrigation and rainwater harvesting systems, alongside inclusive play and sports facilities and recreational spaces that will benefit the whole community.

Parks store carbon in the habitats present and provide benefits such as urban cooling and water attenuation. Increasing the number of parks as we are doing has a positive impact on absorbing carbon emissions.

We will also be revising our Parks and Green Spaces strategy next year, which will determine where else we can and should create more park spaces. We also have committed to ensuring that by removing through traffic and providing more walking routes we create the potential for more park quality green spaces on our estates and streets.

The council's climate change action plan is in the process of being refreshed with an updated version to be considered by cabinet in July. A 'Thriving Natural Environment' is a primary aim of the action plan, which looks to enhance biodiversity alongside delivering projects that result in carbon reduction. The actions within the climate action plan reflect the work being undertaken within the council, and include actions to create greener streets with more planting, increase tree coverage across the borough, provide residents with greater

access to nature and buildings that work alongside and enhance the natural environment.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR LEO POLLAK

Young people are the future, and many are engaged in the debate around air quality. How can we, as a Council, make sure that their voices are heard when considering what interventions to make?

RESPONSE

We have recently started to fund and support young people to actively engage with other young people through local events curated by the artist Love Ssega and 'Love Breathe' on Clean Air Day.

We plan to build on the good peer led engagement already carried out in the borough by connecting it across the council in other public health, reducing emissions and climate change work streams so that we proactively continue to engage with young people and understand their concerns and priorities through:

- **Schools:** We are carrying out air quality audits in schools. As part of this process we discuss with pupils the harmful effects of poor air quality and the steps that can be taken to improve air quality or reduce exposure to poor air quality. We are considering building on this work to have an information day/session in the school on air quality awareness delivered or facilitated by Regulatory Services supported by Public Health.
- **Increase our use of social media:** to share air quality messages and invite comments or suggestions to inform our air quality action plan and initiatives.
- **Support our Southwark Young Advisors:** to deliver key messages and create advocates and ambassadors/ally for air quality.
- **Be accountable to our Youth Parliament:** to allow self-determination by the young elected representatives and to respond to them and support their recommendations. To improve delivery and the key outcomes for our young people as a result.
- **Community and social events:** to proactively target events aimed at young people with simple air quality messages and digital ways/channels with which they can interact and engage.
- **Digital space:** to commit funding and all young people to create digital spaces to increase meaningful engagement.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PARKS, STREETS AND CLEAN AIR FROM COUNCILLOR NICK JOHNSON

Note: This question is for the cabinet member for children, young people and education therefore been moved down as Question 27.

The Surrey Docks Adventure Playground has been closed for many years and is in a generally poor state of repair. Lockdown has shown us the importance of outside space and of physical exercise and this is a sorely missed public amenity. Will the administration commit to investing the necessary funds to restoring the Playground to its former glory and getting it open again for local residents?

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

A capital budget of £3m is being invested in adventure playgrounds in the borough. The Adventure Playground capital programme includes five playgrounds:

- Fredericks
- Ellen Brown
- Peckham Rye
- Dog Kennel Hill
- Bethwin

Funding for the programme derives from allocations made through the council's capital programme with £500,000 awarded in February 2019 and a further £2.5m in April 2020.

Surrey Docks Adventure Playground (SDAP) was fully closed in March 2020 when COVID restrictions were implemented. In the two years prior to its closure staff at the site were only able to offer a significantly reduced after school and holiday service due to the removal of most outdoor play equipment on safety grounds and the generally poor condition of the outdoor area. Staff from Surrey Docks were relocated to support provision at other council run playgrounds when the service re-opened in 2021.

The April 2020 submission noted that:

“Investigative work undertaken at Surrey Docks indicates that the scale of investment needed is far in excess of any other site – the current estimate is that £1.75m is needed. Further planning work will be undertaken but an additional future capital bid will be needed or an alternative source of finance for site to be delivered.”

Officers are developing options to transform SDAP into a vibrant open space that provides a range of activities for local young people. A developed proposal will be costed and submitted to council cabinet for capital funding in 2023.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR SAM DALTON

Following the deputation made by residents from Aylwin Estate in my London Bridge and West Bermondsey ward to Council Assembly on 23 March 2022, what steps have been taken to improve safety and tackle anti-social behaviour on the estate, what further plans does the council have to work alongside the estate's residents to create a safe environment, and how does this link to the council's broader work to improve community safety and reduce crime throughout Southwark?

RESPONSE

We take reports of anti-social behaviour incredibly seriously and will always look to support residents however we can where particular hotspots are identified.

In this case colleagues in Housing have been liaising with key partners in order to address the concerns of safety and anti-social behaviour on the estate.

As part of a Cleaner, Greener, Safer (CGS) bid, two bin enclosures were erected on the side of the block to house the refuse bins. In consultation and in response to concerns raised about this area it was agreed that the area would be secured with key access. These works, including the distribution of keys, were completed in June 2022.

In addition to this:

- CCTV cameras have been deployed to the area
- Cleansing team undertake regular clearance of bulk items
- Environmental Enforcement have been visiting the area and local business to investigate concerns for fly-tipping. The team are currently reviewing evidence whereby two commercial premises may be linked to fly-tipping on the estate.
- Local policing team have been undertaking patrols of the area. Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and other partners will continue to link in with the team to address concerns.

There has been consultation on a Door Entry System and Boundary Wall implementation, with the majority of residents in favour of the installation of a door entry system. Officers are looking at costs associated for these works in order to be able to explore funding options for them. The consultation highlighted that the bin room was the main area causing concern, and work has been undertaken to resolve these concerns.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ESME HICKS

Can the Cabinet Member advise me of when the new anti-social behaviour taskforce will be up and running, and how ward councillors can make the case for their tasking to be within their wards?

RESPONSE

Our £2m anti-social behaviour task force was a key pledge of our recent manifesto and I am delighted to say that we have hit the ground running to deliver on this absolutely crucial community safety initiative.

Work has already begun shaping the existing community warden service. In April the service was reconfigured into two community warden taskforce teams; Town Centres and Estates. These taskforce teams provide a uniformed patrol presence, responding to concerns for crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough, in addition to positively engaging with local communities.

Seven additional community warden taskforce officer posts have been created, with an intention of recruiting these officers by September 2022, bringing a full complement of 1 Team Leader and 10 officers for each task force team.

In addition, two more CCTV operator posts are also being created to support the work of the Taskforce teams.

The taskforce will work across the partnership including the Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, local policing teams, housing officers, Street Population Outreach Team, Cleansing and the Environmental Enforcement team to identify areas of need and emerging concerns, informing patrols.

Ward councillors are able to raise concerns as an enquiry which can then be considered as a tasking or be linked in to other teams if more appropriate. We would always encourage residents to raise concerns of crime and anti-social behaviour with their housing officer or local policing team.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

As part of the consultation into how and where women feel unsafe, how many areas have been identified and what action is being undertaken to make sure that women feel safe in all corners of our borough?

RESPONSE

The 'Let's Talk About Women's Safety' online survey conducted in May-June 2021 received a total of 568 responses. From the online survey, focus groups and police data, some key areas of the borough were identified as areas of concern for women's safety. These are:

- Peckham
- Surrey Quays
- Walworth
- Tooley Street
- Elephant and Castle

A broad range of work has been undertaken to respond to the concerns raised by residents in these areas. These include:

1. Southwark's Young Advisers worked with young people to discuss and tackle issues of gender based violence. They spoke to young people on the street, delivered workshops, developed educational videos and produced webinars and podcasts. They reached more than 1500 young people through this work.
2. Six new CCTV cameras were installed together with a CCTV control room operative who is monitoring risk for women on Southwark's streets.
3. A business engagement programme was undertaken to raise awareness of women's safety and help business owners to identify risk for their staff and customers and prevent harm.
4. Station medics were deployed at London Bridge and Canada Water stations to assist vulnerable or at risk passengers and prevent harm.
5. Designing out crime audits were undertaken in all areas and recommendations implemented including: additional Community Warden Patrols, street cleans, shrubbery maintenance and work with market traders in Peckham to improve visibility. An additional four redeployable CCTV cameras were also purchased to use as a flexible resource when areas of concern for women's safety are identified.
6. Stalking awareness training delivered to staff and residents.

In addition to the works undertaken to improve women's safety in the public realm, the Southwark Safe Spaces for Domestic Abuse initiative was launched in November 2021. The scheme provides safe space locations across the borough where those experiencing domestic abuse can get information and contact services for help and support. There are currently 47 Safe Spaces across the borough in Children's Centres, Schools, Nurseries, Community Organisations, Cafes and a Gym. During 2022/23 we aim to increase the number of safe spaces in the borough to at least 60.

During 2022/23, we will be delivering a borough wide campaign to tackle misogyny, linked to this will be training and workshops focussing on negative male attitudes rolled out to a wide range of staff, community organisations and residents of Southwark. We will also be encouraging all businesses in Southwark to sign up to the Women's Safety Charter.

In order that we understand and take account of the views of our local residents, we will be conducting our 'Let's Talk About Women's Safety' survey on an annual basis and using the results to guide our response to women's safety concerns.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MARGY NEWENS

What changes would the Cabinet Member like to see in the private rented housing sector to ensure that every resident in Southwark has access to a safe, affordable place to call home?

RESPONSE

The private rented sector, as with the rest of the housing market, is broken. Rents are spiralling out of control, tenancies continue to be insecure and fluid, empty homes in the private sector continue to increase, while families too often are forced to move away from their families and community networks. On top of this, local authorities have little or no power to meaningfully intervene to fix these problems. There needs to be enormous change.

The council is working to increase the supply of high quality private rented accommodation through a zero tolerance approach to empty properties in the private sector. Many of these could become private rented properties.

In the Southwark Empty Homes Action Plan we have called for new powers from government including flexibility to charge unlimited council tax premiums, a reduction in the initial two-year grace period, and flexibility to charge premiums on second homes and furnished homes. There also needs to be increased resources for provision of grants and loans, along with simpler and swifter powers around Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs).

The council is keen to see an improvement in standards of housing in the private rented sector. The council is committed to maximising use of our private sector licensing schemes to improve conditions and management standards. The council also works to ensure all houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs) comply with improved HMO standards to driving up standards. The council is working in partnership with landlords, providing a range of advice, support and incentives for good landlords. But the council will use enforcement powers where necessary, with a zero tolerance approach to landlords where the health and safety of residents are put at serious risk. The council is also committed to cracking down on rogue landlords and lettings agencies.

The council will be closely monitoring the recent developments around the Government proposals to extend the decent homes standard to the private rented sector, and will work to help ensure local authorities are given the appropriate powers to enforce this and any other existing standards through any consultations on this matter.

The council would like to see improvements around increasing tenure security in the private rented sector and the abolition of Section 21 “no fault” evictions. There also needs to be more action to protect tenants from excessive rent increases, so that tenants are more able to settle in their homes.

On the benefits side, the Local Housing Allowance plays a key role in allowing households on lower incomes to access the sector, but the rates of local housing allowance need to always reflect the current rents in the sector, and should not be frozen as happened in the past.

We are keen to see private rental tenants empowered to tackle issues in their sector. The council provides advice to tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities. The ending of Section 21 evictions would play a key part of this, so that tenants are protected against retaliatory evictions by landlords.

There has been a move towards some of these changes in the proposals for a Renters Reform Bill by the Government. However many of these proposals have been made in the past and then no progress has been made. These changes need to be swiftly enacted to improve the conditions in the private rented sector.

The Southwark Housing Strategy sets out our approach for moving towards genuinely affordable, high quality, secure and sustainable homes for all. This ambition applies to all tenures including the private rented sector. The Southwark Housing Strategy 2020 and the Southwark Empty Homes Action Plan are available online at <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy>.