

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Item No. 5.1 | Classification: Open | Date: 12 July 2023 | Meeting Name: Council Assembly |
| Report title: | | Members' Question Time | |
| Ward(s) or groups affected: | | All | |
| From: | | Proper Constitutional Officer | |

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members' question time shall not exceed 30 minutes. During this time, members may not question any one cabinet member or committee chair for longer than fifteen minutes. Members are limited to one question at each meeting.

Questions to the leader will be taken first, followed by question from community council councillors followed by questions to other cabinet members. The order in which the different political groups ask questions of the leader will be rotated. Questions to cabinet members will also be rotated. The order of portfolios will be rotated at each meeting such that the cabinet member answering questions immediately after the leader will be the second to last cabinet member to answer any questions at the next meeting of council assembly. The rotation is in line with decisions of council assembly in July 2014 and rotations circulated by the proper constitutional officer.

Cabinet members and committee chairs have discretion to refer a question to another cabinet member.

Responses to members' questions will be circulated on the evening of the meeting.

The Mayor will ask the member asking the question if they wish to ask one supplemental question to the member to whom the question was asked. The supplemental question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. Therefore, supplemental questions to the leader or other cabinet members are not free ranging.

No question shall be asked on a matter concerning a planning or licensing application.

Notes:

1. The procedures on members' questions are set out in council assembly procedure rule 2.9 in the Southwark Constitution.
2. In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.9 (12) & (13) (prioritisation and rotation by the political groups) the order in which questions to the leader appear in this report may not necessarily be the order in which they are considered at the meeting.

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

In May, Southwark Council was ordered to pay £10,000 for two cases of “inexcusable” severe maladministration by the housing ombudsman. How does the council plan to proactively improve the quality of its housing stock to avoid any more cases of severe maladministration?

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

Southwark Council is building one third of England’s council homes, how has this been achieved?

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

Last year Southwark was the second worst authority in the country for rat infestations, with levels almost doubling since 2021. Despite this, Southwark residents are still being asked to foot an extraordinary bill to tackle the issue. The council still charges a whopping £227 for treatment and a paltry half price discount for those on benefits.

The doubling not just of rats, but also of upfront inspection costs last year only highlights the absurdity of the situation.

Our neighbouring councils charge much less, with Lewisham charging only £80 for treatment - and other councils like Tower Hamlets even provide this service for free.

1. Is the council able to provide a geographic breakdown of problem areas by ward and postcode?
2. How many formal complaints about the pest control service have been received from residents over the last three years?
3. Will the council increase the discount available, and expand the discount to all users during the twin crises of the cost of living and rat infestations?

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

The Conservatives crashed the economy and we are all paying the price. The cost of living crisis is deepening for families, and since March the Government’s Energy Bills Support Scheme has stopped. How is the council planning to fill the hole this will leave ahead of the coming winter?

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

Residents on the Kirby Estate have recently had a programme of window replacement by the council. Serious issues with the quality of the new windows have been raised with officers and cabinet members, and remedial action has yet to be taken, despite several attempts to engage the council on the issue. Progress has been slow, and residents have been forced to deal with draughty windows that fail basic building regulations.

This has not only impacted the energy efficiency of the homes, but also has exacerbated issues with damp and mould. Residents have raised serious concerns about the technical sign off process, with blame being shifted amongst various parties.

As a social landlord, we understand that the Council has an obligation to ensure its properties meet certain levels of energy efficiency but this is no excuse for shoddy work or failing to listen to residents when they raise genuine concerns collectively and individually. This work which is supposed to have been an investment in the building stock has not been appropriately monitored and will result in wasted spending from this council, as the windows will inevitably have to be replaced again.

1. Will the council investigate how and why apparently inadequate building work was signed off, and commit to reviewing the process to ensure this doesn't happen again?
2. Is the council aware of any other estates that may have been affected by this issue, with a similar error being made both in terms of the wrong windows being ordered in the first place, and then careless inspection processes not identifying and rectifying issues?
3. Will the council commit to restoring trust with the residents of Kirby Estate by properly responding to their concerns, and fixing the issue so that residents have flats that are both habitable and sellable?

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR RENATA HAMVAS

How will the council be able to take advantage of having an in house leisure service to promote health and wellbeing in Southwark?

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

The Oceandiva party boat plans to host events with up to 1,500 attendees embarking and disembarking from Butler's Wharf up to 140 times a year. A vessel of this size, for this purpose, is entirely unsuitable for a working river like the Thames and will cause untold disruption for Shad Thames residents and all communities along the riverside. Numerous residents, businesses and

community groups have raised concerns about the potential negative impact of Oceandiva.

Static and floating events are due to begin in June 2023 yet the council has made no statement to its regard.

In the view of the council, does the use of Butler's Wharf Jetty and pier for this type of event represent an intensification of its current use? Does the council plan to make a representation at the Newham Licensing Committee when Oceandiva's application for a permanent licence is heard? How will the council mitigate disruption to Shad Thames and other riverside communities in Southwark caused by Oceandiva?

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN BATTESON

How did the Windrush 75 Commemoration Fund benefit local communities?

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

The Conservative Government's attempt to curtail the right to protest is a serious threat to democracy.

On 13 June 2023, the House of Lords passed a Statutory Instrument that added restrictions to the Public Order Act, further curtailing the right to protest.

Liberal Democrat members of the chamber voted against the Statutory Instrument while Labour Peers abstained despite a letter signed by 49 campaign organisations urging them to vote against.

Will the leader of the council join Southwark's Opposition group in supporting those organisations and condemning the peers who chose not to oppose the Conservative Government's plans, and refused to stand up for the rights of Southwark's residents to be able to protest and speak freely?

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

What progress has been made in developing an open water swimming offer in Southwark?

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

Will the council provide an update on the progress of all 'infill' developments throughout the borough?

For each development on an existing estate, can the council provide the following information:

- The current stage of current construction (i.e. hoardings erected, demolition of existing site or building frame started)
- The projected completion date and number of new homes provided (split by affordable and not affordable) upon completion.

Additionally, can the council outline at what point in development does the council consider a new home to have been 'started' and included in house building data?

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

How will the Sustainable Food Strategy tackle food poverty in Southwark?

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

According to the Southwark council's website, the council currently maintains around 30 public toilets across the borough, but the map is not up to date, with some appearing on it having since closed. Groups such as Age UK, the Royal Society for Public Health, and the Campaign for Public Infrastructure have highlighted the crucial need for these facilities both for vulnerable groups and the wider public benefit.

Better provision of public toilets provides convenience to all, but significantly helps to provide dignity for those with chronic illnesses, as well as the elderly and pregnant people. By providing greater access to public spaces, this also serves to boost local businesses and markets, as more people will have confidence to leave the house for extended periods of time without worrying about such basic needs as toilet access.

1. In which team, in which department, does the responsibility for toilets sit within the council?
2. Will the council commit to increasing the number of public toilets?
3. Why has the programme to proactively approach businesses for the community toilet scheme not been re-started after covid?

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

What update can you give on Peckham Library, the re-design of Peckham Square and the management of anti-social behaviour on the Square?

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ADAM HOOD

In November 2022, council assembly passed a Liberal Democrat motion calling for free period products to be provided in all council buildings in Southwark and to provide sanitary bins in all male toilets.

What progress has the council made on this commitment? Can the council please provide a list of all council buildings where free period products are available to members of the public? Will the council go further and begin delivering free period products to low income families, as [Lambeth Council has committed to do](#)?

16. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR BETHAN ROBERTS

What can you tell us about the outcomes of the Apprenticeship open day, and the work the council is doing to deliver apprenticeship at the council and at local business?

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

Urban trees are increasingly important - providing carbon-sequestering to offset emissions, as well as shade and drainage to mitigate the impact of the changing climate.

The Liberal Democrat group have continued to advocate for an ambitious programme of tree planting - but it's been disappointing to see so many trees dying from the batch planted in 2021 and 2022.

1. Has an audit been done of how many and why recent trees have died which can be shared?
2. Why has the watering schedule continued to not be correctly followed?
3. What consequences, if any, have the contractor faced as a result of the failure to adequately implement the tree planting and maintenance programme, especially in terms of future use and fines?

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR IRINA VON WIESE

Falling pupil roll numbers has seen a crisis in school finance, which is leading to some difficult decisions being made about some primary schools being amalgamated or closed. Despite vigorous campaigns by local residents and parents, the recent reports to Cabinet confirmed the sad closure of Townsend school, and further recommended the amalgamation of three more schools on the advice of an independent consultant.

St Mary Magdalen is one of those recommended for amalgamation. It has one of the highest levels of SEND Plus pupils in the borough (over twice the average). Many parents will be very concerned about the distress and disturbance amalgamation may cause.

1. What assessment has been made to ensure the most vulnerable children will continue to have their accessibility needs met in surrounding schools in the event of amalgamation or closure?
2. Why does the council not centrally collect disability data of pupils and staff to better make these assessments?
3. Does the council acknowledge the significant impact the rocketing cost of housing is having on families being able to live in London and the knock-on effect on pupil roll numbers in local schools?

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR NATASHA ENNIN

Southwark is the corporate parent for 417 looked after children and is also supporting 638 young people who are care leavers. How is the voice of children and young people shaping our children's care services?

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR MARGY NEWENS

Southwark has a proud tradition of supporting refugees - when will we be a fully-fledged Borough of Sanctuary?

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR PORTIA MWANGANGYE

Southwark is known for the commitment to support 100% of children and young people with a mental health need. How many young people are benefitting from the NEST free mental health drop in support and how many of those are referred to CAMHS for clinical support?

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR MAGGIE BROWNING

What action is the council taking to introduce free school meals in secondary schools?

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES FROM COUNCILLOR JASON OCHERE

Can Southwark continue to deliver great educational outcomes in education in the context of such steep demographic change and falling school rolls?

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR KATH WHITTAM

How many families now have a home thanks to the council's housebuilding efforts?

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES FROM COUNCILLOR REGGIE POPOOLA

How will the recent insourcing of homelessness hostels benefit service users?

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR NICK JOHNSON

This year, residents who live on boats in South Dock Marina SE16 have once again seen their mooring fees go up. The 7% national government cap was applied to every other Southwark tenant resident but not those living on boats – people for whom Southwark Council is effectively their landlord. There has been an over 100% rise in mooring fees over the last 10 years and, when combined with the wider cost of living crisis, people will soon be priced out in a process of silent gentrification. What steps will the Council take to reduce the cost of Mooring Fees for this community?