

**SOUTHWARK COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**(ORDINARY MEETING)**

**WEDNESDAY 12 JULY 2023**

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS WITH RESPONSES**

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We know that everybody deserves a warm, comfortable place to live and a service from their landlord to maintain homes to a high standard. It is clear in these two cases that we did not live up to that commitment, and we apologise sincerely for failing to live up to our own high standards.

For many years we have held a long-term plan for investment and improvement of the homes we look after. The council has invested more than £500m in our ground-breaking Warm, Dry and Safe (WDS) homes programme since 2010, which made an incredible difference to residents' homes. Since 2016 the Council has been delivering the Quality Homes Investment Programme (QHIP). The QHIP has delivered a range of works including replacing kitchens and bathrooms that have come to the end of their lives, going beyond the Government's Decent Homes Standard to deliver quality homes for Southwark's Council housing residents. More than £300m has been invested through the QHIP since 2016. This investment will continue, complementing spend of around £70m per annum on day-to-day repairs and compliance.

Currently, there are more than 25 QHIP schemes on site across the borough. The remainder of the programme is being reviewed to take account of new building and fire safety requirements. Therefore a new programme will be developed this financial year to align building safety with quality, sustainable homes that support positive health outcomes for residents. This will continue our proactive and planned approach to maintenance over and above our investment in day-to-day and responsive repairs. Since the cases in 2021, the council has made considerable progress and improvements learning from the complaints that were made to the Ombudsman.

Since October 2022 the damp and mould team has visited around 1900 homes, fitting 900 extraction fans, and providing every home visited with a hydrometer to recognise early risks of high humidity so we can use an evidence based

approach to identify where further works are needed. We are also using new technologies and improvements in data analysis to proactively identify homes and blocks with particular issues, enabling us to design solutions to eradicate damp and mould.

Our approach is to deal with the problem, identifying and undertaking the works needed, whilst also informing and supporting residents about changes they can make to improve air quality in their home.

The Council has also begun a programme of Repairs Action Days, visiting our estates to proactively seek resident engagement and feedback around repairs issues, delivering repairs on the day and logging in larger works to be delivered in the most effective way.

Improving our repairs service is one of our core aims as a council and we are working incredibly hard to deliver our residents the service they deserve.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

I am incredibly proud of our housebuilding efforts over the past few years. We are on track to deliver a further 1,000 homes on top of the initial 2,500 target which was met in May last year. I congratulate colleagues from across the council on hitting these milestones as we continue to deliver for our residents.

Building new council homes is not easy. It's a complex and multi-disciplinary effort, requiring input from teams across the organisation and effectively coordinating our efforts. From finance to planning and design to procurement, we now have the ability to plan and work in a timely and effective way. Added to that we have established a productive and robust relationship with the GLA to the point where we are now acknowledged as a key delivery partner for new homes.

By establishing our in-house building arm 'Southwark Construction' we have also been able to bring together a significant concentration of skills, knowledge and capacity. Southwark Construction's wealth of experience and knowledge has resulted in the creation and delivery of a wide range and number of schemes across the borough utilising a range of different delivery models so as to maximise the return on council funding combined with GLA grant allocations. Having a large forward plan of schemes with planning consents enables the council to take forward the most advantageous sites and thus maximise the numbers that have been delivered.

### **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?

### **RESPONSE**

It is not true that the national data on the number of local authority pest control treatments for rats shows that Southwark has the second highest rate of infestations in the country. The number of treatments provided by Southwark is high because Southwark Council provides a comprehensive pest control service for all residents, unlike many councils who no longer provide this service for residents or provide it only for their own council tenants. Many councils also now only provide limited treatments, whereas Southwark provides multiple visits and whole block treatments where required to ensure work is completed to a high standard, resulting in a higher number of treatments provided.

The council's pest control service is also competitively priced. Treatments for rats are free for all council tenants and half price for non-council tenants who are in receipt of benefits. Our overall pest control fees are comparable to, or lower, than other councils.

Similarly, comparing just one fee often does not give a full comparison. For example, whilst some councils may provide a free rat treatment service they often also charge residents for cockroach, mice and bedbug treatments, whereas in Southwark these services are free for all council tenants and half price for other residents who are in receipt of benefits.

Any decision to expand and extend the discount for rat treatments will mean that the council has to look at making up those costs elsewhere, either through higher charges or reduction of services for residents.

Although it is in theory feasible to provide a geographic breakdown of problem areas, the variety of service requests make this a complex task and would take considerable officer time and resource which would otherwise be spent on delivering a service for residents.

The council has received 23 complaints about the pest control service which were upheld since we transferred to the current corporate complaint system in January 2022. This is a relatively low number in comparison to the over 9,000 treatments we provide each year and reflects the quality of service being provided by our pest control team.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

The cost of living is the biggest challenge facing families across our country, many millions of whom have been almost totally abandoned by this government. Where we can, this council will step in where government will not.

Many of our residents saw their energy bills increase from April 223 after the Energy Bill Support Scheme ended in March 2023. To mitigate this and to help low income families with paying energy bills we have established the Southwark Council Energy Bill Support 2023 scheme which has distributed £3.6m of support to 60,000 households to help with energy bills.

We have also distributed over £30m of support to residents to help with the rising cost of household bills as we moved through the worst of the cost of living crisis so far. Included in this the council last year created the Southwark Cost of Living Fund that provided more than £8m, with the majority of support being targeted to low income and vulnerable households.

To continue to support lower income households in the borough, are committed to a further Southwark Cost of Living Fund for 2023/24 worth £11m.

In addition to Southwark's Energy Bill Support Scheme, this new fund will bolster low income and vulnerable families with additional bill support, including a new community referral scheme from autumn where by partners within the voluntary and community sector can refer vulnerable households for financial support. It will fund Holiday Free School Meals for 15,000 eligible children up to and including Easter 2024, and create a new School Hunger Fund.

We will also provide greater access to advice and support through continuing the Southwark Energy Savers service and work with Citizens Advice and other partners to deliver Cost of Living Roadshows throughout the borough.

We know that this winter will be tough for residents across the borough, but we will do everything in our power to mitigate the effects of the Conservative cost of living crisis and support those in need.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We take the quality of our building work incredibly seriously and are fully investigating the issues raised by residents on the Kirby Estate so we can address their concerns and take the appropriate action needed, based on expert advice.

This investigation is being undertaken by a fenestration self-assessment scheme (FENSA) accredited specialist firm, with FENSA being the government-authorised scheme that monitors building regulation compliance

for replacement windows and doors. We are expecting the report in August alongside the Council's Building Control service report into the windows and will be sharing these reports and the actions the council will be taking to respond to their recommendations with residents.

Whilst we do not have the findings of these reports yet, should they find the window installation has failed to meet required standards the council will take action to ensure defects are rectified and to recover the full costs of this work from the contractor, as per the terms of their contract with the Council.

The findings from these reports will also feed into the current service review of the way we undertake major works.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

Southwark Council successfully completed the transfer of management of all its leisure centres to the council on 21 June 2023.

This bold step reflects the council's ambition to deliver a publicly-owned, more resident-focused service and reduce health inequalities in the borough.

There are many advantages of having an in-house leisure service, for example, the ability for better collaboration between council departments and partners, including Public Health and Adult Social Care. The sharing of data will enable greater analysis of need and will ensure a better balance between provision of universal programmes, and targeted programmes - e.g. more exercise referral programmes which support a wider range of health interventions (e.g. diabetes, dementia, falls etc.), and opportunity for linkage to social prescribing pathways.

It will provide opportunities to work across services and council assets – for example, delivering outreach leisure in libraries, parks and youth centres, and providing in-reach opportunities into leisure centres. A good illustration of this is the recent collaboration for the Active Southwark Family Fun Days in the parks happening this summer across the borough.

At a time when leisure services have been cut nationally, we're continuously investing in our services, such as the brand new leisure centre in Canada Water by 2025. This will enable us to improve local neighbourhood facility provision, to focus on locally driven need and to shape programmes and opportunities according to this need – in alignment with the council's emerging new neighbourhood programme.

In addition, having our leisure service in-house will allow for closer working with other boroughs that are transferring their leisure services in-house, and sharing best practice.

We are delighted to have welcomed 350 new staff into the council, through TUPE transfer. They have worked hard over the past few months to ensure a seamless transition. I am proud that they are now part of our council workforce.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We will be making a robust response to Newham that any potential permission must meet the high standards that Southwark expects – we must not allow unacceptable disturbance to our residents.

We are calling upon Newham Council to include the mitigations we set out as conditions on the Premises Licence. This will include the provision of sound limiting devices, limiting hours for deliveries, dedicated personnel to assist with disembarkation and regular meetings with Southwark officers and Councillors. It will be the applicant's responsibility to evidence that they can meet the necessary standards.

In the event Newham give relevant permissions, the council's planning enforcement team are currently looking to determine if planning consent is required due to the intensification of use at Butler's Wharf.

If it is deemed there has been a material intensification and the appropriate consents have not been applied for by Oceandiva, approved enforcement action will be progressed by the council.

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

How did the Windrush 75 Commemoration Fund benefit local communities?

## **RESPONSE**

We were proud to support Southwark's communities to host events that celebrate the rich history and contributions of the Windrush and subsequent generations through the Windrush 75 Commemoration Fund. Those who arrived here 75 years ago answered a call from Britain to help rebuild after the war, and their sacrifice and contribution to our ongoing way of life cannot be overstated.

The first round of funding supported events including community breakfasts, school fun days, theatre performances, animated tours and musical performances. The fund inspired arts and culture in the borough for residents' enjoyment and education, as well as supporting local communities to self-organise, meet and have fun.

In total, 21 events were funded across the borough, which will be posted on our [Southwark Presents](#) website and are taking place between June and September 2023.

A grassroots community representative took part in the assessment panel, describing it as a valuable experience for their relationship with the council. This has informed our approach to inviting community representatives onto the panel for this year's Black History Month grants programme and round two of the Windrush 75 Commemoration Fund, providing further opportunities for relationship and capacity building for the voluntary sector.

A second round of the funding will open for applications on 10 July 2023, for events from 1 November 2023 – 30 June 2024, enabling a full year of celebrations commemorating the anniversary. We expect a similar number of events to be funded during this round and we are excited to see the fun and exciting ways which our community will continue to celebrate Windrush 75.

### **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?



## **RESPONSE**

Peaceful protest is a fundamental right in any confident and stable democracy and we should strive to protect it.

The Labour Party opposed the Tories' Public Order Act as it moved through parliament and members of the Labour front bench in parliament have committed to looking at it again if we win the next election.

The only way to truly prevent the worst excesses of a Conservative government is to remove it from power – and the only way to do that is to vote Labour, which I hope voters will do across the country at the next available opportunity.

### **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?

## **RESPONSE**

The council is committed to exploring sites for open water swimming as part of our ambitions to enable residents of all ages to stay active and healthy in Southwark.

The feasibility study into open water swimming was completed as planned in the last financial year (2022-23) and included a review of models of public outdoor swimming.

Discussions with Swim England and other council teams have also taken place to inform the process and there has also been a review of previous open water swimming sessions, and consideration of ecological / wildlife impact.

An analysis of the current open water sites in the borough was also undertaken, and this identified Greenland Dock/Surrey Dock Water Sport Centre as the most viable venue for a future open water swimming sessions.

Council officers will now work with key internal and external stakeholders to launch an outdoor swimming offer at the preferred site in spring/summer 2024.

### **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?

## RESPONSE

The council adheres to the descriptor of a start on site as per planning policy, in essence making a material start in terms of meaningful works to commence the project. This does not relate to hoarding alone and physical activity must have commenced.

Currently "On Site": 2,188 council rent, 245 Intermediate rent and 395 Private sales.

Scheme Name	Hoardings erected OR Demolition of existing site OR Building frame started	Estimated handover date	Council rent	Inter-mediate	Private
17-19 Wood Vale SE23 3DS	Building frame started	29/09/2023	6	0	0
18-19 Crimscott Street SE1 S106 purchase	Building frame started	28/07/2023	13	0	0
2 Linden Grove (hostels) Ph5b	Building frame started	12/03/2024	6	0	0
35-41 Nunhead Lane	Building frame started	20/10/2023	12	0	0
38 Mary Datchelor Close SE5 7AX	Building frame started	04/03/2024	13	0	0
87 Grosvenor Park	Building frame started	29/09/2023	2	0	0
Adrian & Dennis (39-44 Rutley Close)	Building frame started	31/08/2023	25	0	0
Aylesbury_FDS Package A ( less Batches 1-3)	Building frame started	10/07/2023	158	0	0
Aylesbury_FDS Package B	Building frame started	24/09/2025	352	0	0
Bells Gardens Community Centre	Demolition of existing site	15/10/2025	83	0	0
Breamore House	Building frame started	29/09/2023	1	0	0

<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Hoardings erected OR Demolition of existing site OR Building frame started</b>	<b>Estimated handover date</b>	<b>Council rent</b>	<b>Inter-mediate</b>	<b>Private</b>
Canada Water (Plot K1) S106 Purchase	Building frame started	20/11/2023	60	19	0
Cator Street Extra Care Phase 2	Building frame started	18/03/2024	58	0	0
Cherry Gardens School, Macks Road SE16 [A4] [Development Agreement]	Building frame started	12/10/2023	26	0	30
Comber House Drying Rooms	Building frame started	31/10/2023	6	0	0
Commercial Way	Building frame started	17/07/2023	74	35	0
Fendall&Maltby	Building frame started	14/02/2024	40	0	0
Flaxyard site, Sumner Road SE15 (Lot B) HZ [Direct Delivery] With Peckham Library Square	Building frame started	14/02/2024	96	24	0
Former Rotherhithe Civic Centre, Albion Street, SE16 7BS and; Rear of Albion Primary School (Southern End), Albion Street, SE16 7JD	Building frame started	15/11/2023	39	24	13
Haddonfield Garages	Building frame started	26/07/2023	14	0	0
Heaton House	Building frame started	15/08/2023	8	0	0
Henslowe Road (Garages)	Building frame started	13/11/2023	3	0	0
Ledbury Towers	Demolition of existing site	28/02/2029	260	15	65
Lindley Estate 157-177 Commercial Way	Demolition of existing site	15/10/2025	44	0	0

<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Hoardings erected OR Demolition of existing site OR Building frame started</b>	<b>Estimated handover date</b>	<b>Council rent</b>	<b>Inter-mediate</b>	<b>Private</b>
Lomond Grove	Building frame started	22/05/2024	22	0	0
New Almshouse at 94-116 Southwark Park Road	Building frame started	30/06/2023	57	0	0
Penry Street New Homes (was petrol Stn. Old Kent Road)	Building frame started	01/12/2023	13	0	11
Regina & Columbia Point (part of Canada Est QHIP row 299)	Building frame started	31/10/2023	2	0	0
Rennie Estate	Building frame started	01/10/2024	49	0	0
Rye Hill Park Garages	Building frame started	19/01/2024	23	0	0
Salisbury Est Car Park (Balfour Street)	Building frame started	29/09/2023	26	0	0
Sceaux Gardens (Florian and Racine inc some garages)	Demolition of existing site	28/02/2025	79	0	0
Sedgemoor Place (TA)	Building frame started	28/07/2023	13	0	0
Shops & Council Offices, Manor Place /Stopford Road SE17 [A1]	Building frame started	16/10/2023	30	0	26
Slippers Estate	Demolition of existing site	05/12/2024	18	0	0
Styles House	Demolition of existing site	25/09/2025	25	0	0
TA-Contract 1	Building frame started	24/07/2023	12	0	0
TA-Contract 2	Building frame started	15/09/2023	15	0	0
TA-Contract 3	Building frame started	06/10/2023	10	0	0
Tenda Road	Building frame started	01/07/2023	12	0	0
Tissington Silverlock Estate	Building frame started	01/07/2024	35	0	0

Scheme Name	Hoardings erected OR Demolition of existing site OR Building frame started	Estimated handover date	Council rent	Inter-mediate	Private
underground garages					
Tustin Regeneration	Building frame started	31/12/2030	345	125	220
Underhill Road	Building frame started	14/07/2023	3	0	0
Workshops, 42 Braganza Street SE17 [A1]	Building frame started	11/09/2023	0	3	30

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

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

### RESPONSE

The Sustainable Food Strategy and our Right to Food plans build on our extensive work to tackle food poverty in the borough, including delivery of our Free Healthy School Meals programme, Holiday Food and Fun programme and holiday free school meals. We are also working with convenience stores to develop a healthier, affordable offer for our residents.

The Sustainable Food Strategy will tackle food poverty by increasing access to affordable food, building in a cash-first approach, delivering our right to food plan and increasing access to health food through voucher schemes.

We will expand support to our local communities who provide affordable food models, such as pantries, and will embed affordable food retail into our approach to planning, regeneration and commercial properties during the cost of living crisis.

Our cash first approach will signpost to income maximisation, welfare schemes and debt advice to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in the borough, and our Right to Food plan will include actions to improve access to healthy, affordable food for priority groups.

We are committed to supporting families and residents across the borough through these difficult times, and the Sustainable Food Strategy will encompass all our work in tackling food poverty and ensuring all our residents have access to healthy food.

### **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?

### **RESPONSE**

Within the council there are several teams that have responsibility for different elements of public toilet provision. These include waste and cleansing, the Local Economy Team and parks and leisure.

The council does provide public access to toilets, but the greatest number of toilets are in commercial buildings and businesses. We therefore work with business owners to maximise the number of toilets that are made available for public use, and will continue to do so.

We particularly support the increase in toilets which are fully accessible under the accredited Changing Places scheme. These provide larger than average facilities for adults and children where privacy and dignity can be maintained for individuals (and their carers if relevant).

In addition to the Changing Places provision that was installed for public use in the Castle Leisure Centre, a Changing Places toilet has just been installed in Peckham Pulse Leisure Centre. The new Canada Water Leisure Centre will also have a Changing Places facility, and installation of a further Changing Places facility is in progress in Dulwich Park.

Toilets are an essential feature of our streets, public buildings and parks, making life comfortable for our residents when travelling and working across the borough. We continue to review public toilet provision and consider new areas where there is need.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We're pleased to report that the Peckham library refurbishment has now been completed, with the library due to re-open on 17 July 2023.

Our focus has been on reducing the library's carbon emissions, with works including installation of a new air source heat pump, new LED lighting repairs to the roof and windows and redecoration of the library space with new flooring and carpeting. The library layout has been improved with new shelving and furniture, and the library also has new and upgraded public PCs with faster Wi-Fi.

On the redesign of Peckham Square, following extensive consultation over the last year the project has been broken down into two packages of work. The proposal to refurbish 91/93 Peckham High Street, which will provide a new home for Peckham Platform, is scheduled to be submitted for planning permission. The proposals for the wider Square, which includes an assessment of the condition of the Arch, will be submitted for planning early next calendar year.

The Town Centre Community Warden team regularly patrol Peckham Square and work has been undertaken to engage with street drinkers and those concerned with anti-social behaviour in the square. We want our residents to feel safe wherever they are in our borough, at whatever time of day or night and as such we have begun highlighting concerns to the local policing team for the area.

Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit continues to work on local anti-social behaviour affecting communities, in particular drug related activity, and we will continue to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour on our communities and enhance a safer environment around Peckham 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?](#)

## RESPONSE

In April 2023, we were proud to install free sanitary product vending machines in 47 of our public-facing buildings in gender neutral, disabled and female toilets along with associated sanitary bins. We are looking at supplying sanitary products in all our buildings where possible, after our initial roll-out of vending machines. We believe that everyone has the right to access sanitary products and we will continue to deliver these for residents and will seek to expand provision where possible. The current list is as follows:

- 160 Tooley Street
- 376 Walworth Road
- 47b East Dulwich Road
- Alms House South (4-6 Chumleigh South)
- Aylesbury Neighborhood Housing Office Thurlow Street
- Blue Anchor Library, Market Place, Southwark Park Road
- Brandon Youth Centre
- Camberwell New Library ,48 Camberwell Green
- Canada Water Library 21 Surrey Quays Road London
- Children's Specialist Services, 7 Talfourd Place, Peckham
- Columbarium , Camberwell New Cemetery, Brenchley Gardens
- Coroners Court, 1 Tennis St
- Council Offices, 72 Copeland Road
- Dulwich Library, 368 Lordship Lane (inclusive of outbuilding)
- Dulwich Park Public Toilets College Road
- East Street Library, 168-170 Old Kent Rd, London
- Ellen Brown Centre, 145, Grange Road
- Francis Peak Building, Dulwich Park, College Road, London
- Grove Vale Library, Unit 23, 18-22 Grove Vale
- HASS, Ground Floor, 17-19 Bournemouth Road
- Honor Oak Crematorium Camberwell New Cemetery Brenchley Gardens
- John Harvard Library, 207-211 Borough High Street
- Kingswood Order And Collect Library, 23 Seely Drive
- Leathermarket JMB 26 Leathermarket Street London
- Main Lodge Gatehouse Camberwell New Cemetery, Brenchley Gardens
- Mint St Adventure Playground, Southwark Bridge Rd, Lant Street
- Nunhead Library, 88 – 138 Gordon Road
- Offices, 1st Floor 9-11 Chumleigh Gardens
- Park Offices, Pavillion, 2 Park Approach, Gomm Road
- Park Rangers Office & Public WC block, Peckham Rye Park
- Park Rangers Office, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park , 91 St Georges Road
- Peckham Rye Adventure Playground, Homestall Road
- Public Conveniences, Portland Street
- Public Toilet Portakabin, Camberwell Old Cemetery, Forest Hill Road, London
- Public Toilets Burgess Park, 106 Cobourg Road
- Public Toilets, Pavillion, 2 Park Approach, Gomm Road



- Rangers Portakabi, Nunhead Cemetery, Linden Grove
- Recreation & Changing Rooms, Belair Park & Mansion, Gallery Rd
- SAST House, 47-49 Dawes Street
- Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library
- Southwark Registry Office, 34 Peckham Road
- Southwark Resource Centre, 10 Bradenham Close
- Sumner House, Sumner Road
- Thomas Calton Secondary School, Alpha St
- Unit 1, Sandgate Industrial Estate, 57 Sandgate Street
- West Camberwell NHO Castlemead 232 Camberwell Rd

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We were thrilled to host over 200 young people at the apprenticeship open day on 26 May 2023, with the event totally sold out. Tooley Street was filled with queues of smiling, eager candidates hoping to know more about the opportunities available and meet some of our apprenticeship partners. Engagement throughout the event was extremely positive and feedback received from residents and candidates was excellent. Overall, we were delighted to receive a record number of 497 applications for the campaign.

For our own council apprenticeships, 52 young people were shortlisted and invited to an assessment centre on 27 and 28 June 2023, with seventeen job roles offered and accepted. We're excited that these young people will begin on-boarding in August 2023.

We were proud to have exceeded our target of 350 apprenticeships across the council and partner organisations for 2022-23, with 568 apprenticeships started over that period. We are well on track to achieve our ambitious target of 2,000 new apprenticeships over four years.

In 2022 we also introduced a new levy transfer scheme in partnership with the London Progression Collaboration, where up to 25% of the council's apprenticeship levy goes to support local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to create good quality apprenticeships paying at least London Living Wage. This service also supports local businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities and building apprenticeships into the workforce.

Our employment support providers via Southwark Works are targeted with the promotion of apprenticeships and supporting clients to secure and succeed in apprenticeship roles. Specialist support is available to prepare clients for apprenticeships opportunities and ensure that they have the entry-level qualifications needed to train in their career of interest.

Later this year, we will publish a new skills delivery plan, developed with the Southwark Skills Partnership of local education and training providers. The skills delivery plan will include a focus on developing new apprenticeship pathways aimed at increasing the number of young people from Southwark taking up apprenticeships in local growth sectors, such as life sciences and the green economy.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

Tree planting continues to be a key priority of our Council Delivery Plan, since 2020 we have planted over twenty five thousand trees across the borough, and we are on track to deliver our commitment to make Southwark the first inner London council to have 100,000 trees, so every neighbourhood has more trees and increased canopy cover. Trees are crucial to cooling our streets during the summer months and mitigating flood risks during heavy rains. They improve our air quality and make our borough a more pleasant place to live.

Following reports of some recently planted trees sadly dying in our borough, we carried out an audit from 2020 to get to the root of the problem. We found that 226 trees had died, and twenty-one had been vandalised.

Of our four suppliers, we found that two had not adequately resourced watering maintenance for the contracted periods. As part of contractual obligations suppliers must replace dead trees at their own cost (plus 3 years maintenance)

Suppliers that have demonstrated poor performance in the last three planting seasons will not be invited to tender for the 2023/24 programme, as we look to ensure quality delivery of trees which are of such importance to the wellbeing of our borough.

## **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?

### **RESPONSE**

1:

Safeguarding is the key aspect in ensuring an effective transfer for pupils between schools.

There will be a transfer meeting between the two schools to ensure that children's needs are known and met. At Townsend and St Francesca Cabrini primaries, a link Local Authority Education Officer worked 1-1 with schools and families. The same process will apply at St Mary Magdalen.

Families will be supported to ensure a safe and supportive transfer.

Typically, as seen at St John's Walworth, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinators (SENDCos) from each school will be liaising with each other and the family to ensure an effective transition. There will be handover meetings for documentation, visits to familiarise the pupil with the new school and staff, meetings with teaching and support staff to ensure each child is as confident as possible.

For children who don't have a special need but are vulnerable, all aspects of their need will be addressed and proper liaison will happen with for example, attendance officers at school, Family Early Help, Children's Social Care, social workers. The same processes as outlined above will also apply.

2:

There is an annual school pupil and staff census collection for maintained schools which contains information including disability, needs. This informs equality impact assessments and evaluations made by the Education and Admissions teams in Southwark.

Collection of data for all pupils, including SEND, is a statutory Local Authority requirement. The school census collects termly SEN provision for pupils – limited to: education, health and care plan (EHCP), SEN Support or no SEN. In the Spring census only the local authority (LA) obtain the types of SEN linked to EHCP. The LA has access to this information.

School pupil census information is made publicly available in June each year based on the Spring Census.

The LA has access to maintained school staff and centrally employed school staff disability information.

School workforce census including maintained, academies and centrally employed school staff information is made publicly available in June each year based on the yearly November Census.

3:

The council recognises that the cost of housing, alongside other London-wide and national issues such as Brexit, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis are contributing factors to the decrease in demand in school places.

However, the low birth rate is main reason for the significant demographic shift. In England and Wales, the number of live births has dropped by 14% since 2012 and in London, there has been a 17% decrease of the birth rate. The reduction in Southwark is far more drastic, falling by 30% over the same period (2012-2021).

Despite this, we have started the highest number of affordable homes in London. We have completed 1,062 council homes, providing families in our borough with affordable, safe, and secure places to live.

We have an extensive programme of support for families in Southwark. The council's Cost of Living Fund (for 2023-24), for example, continues to provide financial support to low-income households.

The council provides healthy free school meals to all children in primary schools and has done so for over a decade and are introducing a targeted Free Healthy School Meal (FHSM) pilot to tackle hunger in our secondary schools.

We have developed a comprehensive strategy designed to future proof our schools and will enable us to be ready in future years for further demographic shifts in Southwark.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

The voice of young people in our borough, especially those who we care for, is crucial in understanding the impact of the work we do and how we can always improve in order to give these children the best possible start in life.

Our Children in Care & Care Leaver Council, Speakerbox, brings together all age representatives of our care community. Speakerbox representatives sit on the council's corporate parenting committee and hold regular sessions with that committee which look at thematic issues affecting those in our care, challenging political and officer leaders to focus on the issues that affect them and hold them to account.

Speakerbox lead training for practitioners and have been part of a workshop on anti-racist practice and they will, going forward, be part of co-delivering this training which is mandatory for all staff.

Speakerbox, with officer support, also makes considerable efforts to ensure it is hearing and representing the voice of the wider group of children in care by supporting and delivering a series of engagement sessions, communications and events across the year to ensure that more children in care have the opportunity to take part, join the council and have their voices heard. Recently a second Children's Rights Officer was jointly funded with the Virtual School to reach out to children with disabilities and younger children and ensure a wider group of children have their voices heard.

The voice of children in care and care leavers is brought into decision making early and consistently when discussions affecting care services are undertaken. For example, our children sit on stakeholder recruitment panels for all posts Grade 14 and above; one of the very first Southwark 2030 listening events was a focus group with children in care and care leavers; and children in care were active participants in the development of our designs for new children's homes facilities.

The Care Leaver Service also have steering groups where young people meet regularly and shape the service for care leavers; they have recently worked with health colleagues to shape the health offer and support for care leavers and are linked to the National Benchmarking Group and are keen to link to the Youth Parliament.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

Southwark has a proud tradition of welcoming and supporting people fleeing persecution, conflict and disaster.

Over the last year the council has:

- Provided direct support to 756 refugee households (total of 1,456 individuals, including 556 children). This was an 89% increase in the number of households supported in the previous year
- Supported 409 households (total of 779 individuals, including 349 children) through our No Recourse to Public Funds Service
- Delivered a wide range of wrap around support to over 200 Afghan nationals evacuated in Operation Pitting.
- Supported 301 Ukrainian households (total of 508 guests, including 127 children) who have arrived in Southwark.
- Provided longer term resettlement support to refugees in Southwark under the various government resettlement schemes.
- Worked with voluntary sector partners ensuring a further 5,000 received various forms of support and advice.

The first two stages of the City of Sanctuary award process are complete – signing up to the City of Sanctuary pledge and charter and working with and committing to supporting the local City of Sanctuary Group.

Southwark is now a non-awarded member of the City of Sanctuary Network and this commits us to developing a strategy/action plan to become an awarded member. We have completed a very detailed and thorough needs assessment of the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Southwark to inform our strategy and action plan that leads to becoming an awarded member.

The criteria to be an awarded member are:

- To join the network (complete), pass a council motion setting out our commitment to being a place of Sanctuary (complete), and commit to working with the local group and or other local refugee networks (complete).
- To show evidence of this work with local groups and receive endorsement for the award application on submission, commit to work with partners to identify national policy issues and make collective representations to government, and the production of the written strategy covering three years.

The strategy is being co-produced with a multi-agency forum, informed by an experts by experience group of refugees. The final submission once complete is considered by an Independent Sanctuary Recognition Panel.

We are currently working with a group of key partners to develop the strategy, and intend to have completed the strategy and be awarded Status by the end of the year.

In addition and supportive of this work the Southwark Library service are applying to be Libraries 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 child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for clinical support?

**RESPONSE**

The Nest is a service that provides support for all Southwark young people aged 11- 25 who may need confidential advice and support with their mental health and wellbeing. It is also a hub for outreach and digital innovation for children's mental health.

Currently 300 children and young people are benefiting from the support provided by the Nest.

Since the service was launched three years ago they have helped over 1,500 children and young people and delivered more than 3,100 hours of therapy. Over 470 young people supported by wellbeing coaches. Young people accessing the Nest benefit from the support of wellbeing coaches, who have experience in providing different types of therapy including, art, music, play, psychodynamic and interpersonal therapy.

There are regular multi-disciplinary referral meetings between CAMHS, the Nest, and the Mental Health in Schools Team to ensure that the right level of support is offered to meet the child's need in as timely a way as possible. The Nest estimates that 25-30 young people per year are referred for specialist CAMHS support.

The Nest is also piloting Nest Plus. This service has expanded The Nest's reach in Southwark by establishing satellite sites strategically placed throughout the community. Operating from GP surgeries, community centres, and places of worship, The Nest Plus service is staffed by a team of therapeutic professionals dedicated to providing a comprehensive range of support for young individuals grappling with, for example, anxiety and depression.

**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?

## **RESPONSE**

Southwark Council has led the way on free healthy school meals for over a decade. Offering all children a healthy meal in primary schools means better concentration, an end to the stigma of means testing, and ultimately better life chances for pupils.

Building on the announcement by the Mayor of London that he will be funding free school meals for all primary school pupils during the 2023/24 school year, the council are introducing a targeted Free Healthy School Meal (FHSM) pilot to tackle hunger in our secondary schools.

All Southwark secondary schools are being offered funding to provide a school meal for all pupils from families who are in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) and are not currently eligible Free School Meals (FSMs) as per Government criteria.

Officers are working closely with school leaders and specialist catering advisors to make sure all schools have the necessary kitchen equipment, catering staff, service point capacity and payment systems in place to support increased meal provision.

A catering audit of each school has already been completed to support school leadership and catering providers to overcome any barriers to schools taking up the offer of funding. To better understand the potential challenges schools may experience, a pilot is also ongoing throughout the summer term at a large secondary school. Lessons from the pilot and the audit findings will be shared with schools.

The offer will launch in the autumn term of academic year 2023/24. It is likely that there will be a phased approach so that all schools have the time they need to make the necessary preparations.

Conditions of grant will be attached to the funding, setting out the expectation of quality meal provision, a positive experience for pupils and value for money.

To ensure eligible families and pupils take up the free meal offer a targeted communication plan for the summer and autumn is planned.

The programme will be evaluated to inform the next steps. The evaluation will capture the learning from the implementation as well as impact.

### **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?



## **RESPONSE**

The “Keeping Education Strong” strategy is focused on ensuring that schools continue to deliver a relevant, inclusive curriculum, matched to the needs of Southwark’s children and young people. Education in Southwark has never been stronger following our £200m investment in school buildings and this is evident with 97.2% of Southwark’s schools judged as Good or Outstanding.

The council continues to do all it can to support schools and our “Keeping Education Strong” strategy gives our schools the best possible chance to sustain the excellent educational outcomes for our children and young people.

We are the first local authority to apply a comprehensive strategic approach. This approach will be instrumental in supporting our schools and communities through this difficult and challenging time and most importantly, it will enable us to be ready in future years for further demographic shifts.

The Special, Nursery, Primary and Secondary maintained schools continue to be supported by link school advisers and consultants who work closely with leadership teams on the quality of education, leadership and management, and behaviour in schools.

The council has robust processes to ensure that less than good schools rapidly improve within a year. Additionally, it has brokered school based hubs of excellence as a support for school development e.g. in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and racial literacy.

The adviser team also brokers school to school support by arranging the secondment of key staff for fixed periods to schools in need of leadership capacity.

### **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?

## **RESPONSE**

We are so proud to have built or started one third of all council homes in England last year. We have completed a fantastic 1,062 council homes, providing families in our borough with safe, comfortable, secure places to live.

I am delighted to have heard from so many families who have moved into their new homes. A resident on Daniels Road in Peckham said: “My family and I are really pleased with our new home, which is a specially adapted wheelchair property as my 12-year-old son has cerebral palsy.”

Akinkunmi Raji at Prout House in Camberwell Green said “Our new flat is spacious, meets our needs, and I feel safe and comfortable in the area. This new home has brought stability, security and happiness for my family.”

Faisal Anod at Lilac House said that their new flat had made him a completely different person and that he is much happier.

Our team continues to deliver new homes for local families, with a further 2,188 council homes on site. I congratulate the team for their work in delivering such a great achievement.

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

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

**RESPONSE**

We have consistently said that where we can insource services, that it should be our first preference. Services run in-house are often better value for residents and provide a better service, all while being more accountable to the public.

Our insourcing programme has allowed us to provide a consistent service across those hostels which we have taken in-house, furthering our efforts in tackling the main causes of homelessness, supporting those in need and ultimately ending rough sleeping in the borough.

The three insourced hostels are now better placed to benefit from the Mental Health pathway which offer more options for supported accommodation for those who are referred from the Mental Health panel. Having these hostels as a part of that pathway will ensure that service users have access to most appropriate support to help with their move on to more independent living.

In addition, the current council-managed hostels benefit from easy access to other council services to provide wrap around support to residents. The benefit of this resource is now available to all the 6 supported hostels across the borough with improved ability to shift resources quickly to tackle local needs and address safeguarding issues.

The Southwark Safeguarding Adults Board 2020/21 Annual report highlighted that insourcing the three additional supported hostels allows the development of a pathway for homeless people/rough sleepers that will ensure that needs are being met in the best possible way by all agencies, thus facilitating the response to safeguarding concerns.

We using everything in our power to end rough sleeping and the consistent, wraparound support provided in these hostels is part of the path to achieving that goal.

**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?

**RESPONSE**

We fully appreciate the concerns of those living at the South Dock Marina and can offer support and advice from our cost of living fund and other agencies.

The cost of mooring in Southwark remains considerably lower than many other docks and mooring sites across London. The fee setting process includes benchmarking mooring rates against other providers rates – including moorings in private ownership, in trust and other local authority owned mooring sites.

In the early part of 2020 the council committed to freezing the mooring fees for 2020/21 and then increasing only by CPI + 1% for the following two financial years. For this year, the council have applied the same CPI + 1% increase.

The increases from the 1 April 2023 are also in line with the level of fee increases introduced by other local authority owned marinas.

Furthermore, the council is not the landlord of berth holders and there is no requirement to match mooring fees to rent levels in the social or affordable rental sector. The government's cap on rent increases does not apply to marina mooring fees.

The council is investing significant capital to develop and expand the marina and dockyard offer. This will enable a sustainable and more vibrant marina community, offering key infrastructure and improved facilities and utilities at the marina, making it a better place to live for all its residents.