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| <b>Item No.</b><br>5.1             | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>22 November 2023 | <b>Meeting Name:</b><br>Council Assembly |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Members' Question Time           |  |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All                              |  |
| <b>From:</b>                       |                                | 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 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 IAN WINGFIELD**

Can the Leader let us know how many new council homes have been completed in the last 12 months?

**2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID WATSON**

Despite the council's failure to build the council homes it promised, private development across Southwark is booming. Residents living between construction sites are rightly asking when they will see the community benefit of all this private development. Section 106 and community infrastructure levy (CIL) contributions for community investment have reached millions of pounds but are currently just burning a hole in the council's pocket. This despite the immense financial pressures felt elsewhere and growing despondence among residents neighbouring, particularly, big developments.

Councillors were initially promised a review into CIL allocations in autumn this year. But there has been no communication about this. Why has the review been delayed?

Will the council consider increasing its use of S.106 powers to help plug the housing revenue account (HRA) funding gaps, both in cash terms and social housing provision?

When will residents who have endured years of noise and disruption see the benefits of community investments through S.106 and CIL funding?

**3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE**

Could the Leader provide an update of Old Kent Road regeneration?

**4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR RACHEL BENTLEY**

The pressure on the council's finances including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is reaching critical levels, with alarm bells being rung by many other councils facing similar problems. Whilst proper funding for vital public services must be restored by central government, it's vital that the Council's own funding streams are well-managed. Residents will have noticed commercial properties sitting vacant and are keen to know that businesses in Southwark are paying their fair share of rent and business rates. Please can you advise the following in relation to the Council's commercial property portfolio:

- What was the total amount of commercial rent arrears in 2022/2023 and in the current year to date?
- What is the overall value of arrears versus the commercial rent budget?

- Is there a strategy to support businesses such as pubs and other hospitality venues that incurred arrears during mandatory closures in the Covid pandemic?

**5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR KIMBERLY MCINTOSH**

As part of Southwark Stands Together, the council has committed to tackling racial disparities in its workforce. What progress is being made towards closing the council's ethnicity pay gap?

**6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR EMILY TESTER**

Southwark is lucky to be home to many railway viaducts and arches, dating back to the Victorian era of railway speculation – the Spa Road junction is even Grade II listed. Whilst some of the arches have been put to good use, some of the tunnels remain dingy, unlit, and unsafe.

- What will the council do to make these spaces a safe and welcoming part of the street-scape?
- How will the council ensure that the heritage assets are preserved for future generations to appreciate?

**7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR KATH WHITTAM**

Can the Leader update on the figures for genuinely affordable housing delivery in Southwark?

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

In 2020, Southwark Councillors unanimously passed a motion calling for Southwark to become a 'Borough of Sanctuary' as part of the City of Sanctuary movement.

In that time, Southwark has failed to become an official borough of sanctuary and the campaign calling for this has become inactive.

Does the council plan to uphold the commitment made in 2020 for Southwark to become a borough of sanctuary? Is there a strategy across the council for how to achieve this? Has Southwark Council as an organisation been in contact with City of Sanctuary to seek guidance as to how to become a borough of sanctuary?

**9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MARGY NEWENS**

Could the leader outline how the council accounts for heritage and conservation issues within planning policy?

**10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN**

Residents of Styles House are rightly furious at the recent cancellation of a redevelopment they were all looking forward to. Eight council homes have now been cancelled in what is yet another blow to the council's unfunded housebuilding promise.

When was the council aware that the building design was no longer compliant with new fire safety laws?

When did the council first engage with residents and the tenants and residents association (TRA) about problems with the development?

How many other council construction projects currently in the pipeline will be affected by the issue that cancelled Styles House?

**11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CHLOE TOMLINSON**

Can the leader outline the cost of living support available to residents in Rye Lane and across the borough over the winter?

**12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR HAMISH MCCALLUM**

At the beginning of the summer the deputy cabinet member for housing allocations committed to refreshing the allocations scheme in order to be 'chain maximising', with a pilot to be conducted in the short term.

- Please will the Leader update us on the progress of that pilot.
- How will the extra administrative burden of this new system be handled given the pressure the allocations team are under with record high waiting lists and hundreds of monthly approaches?
- Though the logic of prioritising allocations on the basis of maximising chains is sound in theory, how will the council ensure that those with the greatest need are not waiting even longer than they already are?

**13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR SANDRA RHULE**

How are we encouraging more businesses to become Living Wage employers?

**14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE**

The Cleaner Greener Safer (CGS) fund in theory represents a funding stream for projects that enhance communities – but many residents feel that in practice, it is not being followed through.

- How CGS funded projects have been followed through to completion, against the total number of projects granted initial funding, to date?
- How many CGS projects have been rejected, and on what grounds?
- The flora at Nursery Row Park now taken down in the name of ‘safety’ was a CGS project – how many other CGS projects have been cancelled or removed by the council?

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

Residents of Rotherhithe and Surrey Docks have been enduring significant traffic problems on Lower Road for months as the cycle lane works are being completed. Whilst the completion of the cycle lane is welcome, residents will be concerned about both the timeline of the project and the impact of the traffic flow adjustments.

- What modelling has been done to ensure that the end result will have lower traffic levels than before?
- The reversal of the flow of Cope Street is a welcome part of the plans - but has the council considered implementing this now (i.e blocking access from Rotherhithe Old Road) to alleviate some of the traffic pressure onto Lower Road whilst works are in progress?
- What is the timeline for completion of this project and the start of the next phase of highways work in the area?

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

Residents of Perronet House in St George’s Ward have been living with severe on-going leaks in the building since 2018. The delays are reportedly due to the presence of asbestos obstructing attempts by council officers to fix the leaks.

- Why has the council not been able to arrange the removal of asbestos in the past 5 years in order to allow proper repairs?
- Are any other repairs being delayed due to the presence of asbestos and how long have they been delayed for?
- Does the council have a named contractor used for the removal of asbestos and other harmful materials or is that service handled internally?

**17. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LEEMING**

How has insourcing improved our leisure services?

**18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR SAM FOSTER**

Can you provide an update on when we can expect the Una Marson Library to open on the Aylesbury?

**19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS**

Can you provide an update on the newly re-open Kingswood Library?

**20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON**

In 2011, the Friends of Nursery Row Park used £10,000 of council funding to create a flower walkway in the park.

In September 2023, council officers, at the request of the police and with no dialogue with the local community, tore down this flower walkway. The council and police claim this was in order to deter anti-social behaviour (ASB) by clearing CCTV sight lines. However, Residents report this action has done nothing to reduce ASB in the park.

- Having failed to tackle ASB in Nursery Row Park by removing the flower walkway, how does the council intend to resolve this ongoing issue?
- Will the council apologise to locals and the Friends of Nursery Row Park for destroying a flower walkway that took 10 years of care and maintenance to grow?
- Does the council have a plan to improve the park for locals or will they wait another 10 years for the flower walkway to regrow?

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

Having brought leisure services in-house in June, there are already reports of gyms being neglected and in disrepair. Users of one gym in Peckham have reported up to 15 broken machines at a time and mould on the premises.

- How does the council plan to improve the Peckham Pulse Gym for users?
- Does the council have a ring fenced budget for improving existing leisure facilities in budget and, if so, how much is in that budget?

**22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, LEISURE AND PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR LEO POLLAK**

What is being undertaken to ensure the council maintains the 30 Green Flags in our parks?

**23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR SUNIL CHOPRA**

Following the “A New Met for London” Plan, what is the council doing to ensure local residents get the policing they deserve?

**24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR KETZIA HARPER**

The Baroness Casey Review found that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic. What is the council doing directly with the local police command unit and the MPS more widely to ensure the review’s recommendations are delivered locally?