



Corporate Peer Challenge Position Statement

October 2023

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Welcome to Southwark

Southwark is home to more than 300,000 people, 18,000 businesses, engaged and supportive communities, and a world class cultural scene. We are powered by our people, whose heritage and history make our borough dynamic and diverse.

Our borough is rich with internationally renowned locations and destinations. Peckham, London Bridge, Elephant and Castle, and Dulwich are all well-known beyond our borders, as are our world-class institutions and landmarks, including Tate Modern, The Shard, Borough Market, Guys Hospital and Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts.

Whether they are descendants of nation-building generations of factory workers and dockmasters; pioneering immigrants who travelled on the Windrush and via other routes to reach England from Africa, the Caribbean, Ukraine and beyond; or bold reformers determined to change the fortunes of south Londoners trapped in poverty, Southwark's people enrich local life with a distinctive mix of passion, resilience, hard work and joy.

In common with the rest of our city we are also a place of contrast. While many thrive, others struggle. Inequalities in health, income and access to opportunities remain, despite efforts to reduce them. Our **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** shows that life expectancy varies by almost a decade across the borough, from 89 in the south of the borough to 80 in other areas.

Southwark contains some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and had faced significant issues of fuel poverty and food insecurity even before the start of the cost of living crisis.

Our residents have told us they want to live in a borough that is green, safe and caring - a borough that provides a fair chance for everyone to get ahead through a relentless focus on tackling inequality and discrimination. Southwark people want to live in a decent home that supports their health and wellbeing, and have fulfilling and stable work that enables them to thrive and enrich their lives and that of their families.

Our council

In the first decade of austerity, the council's focus was firmly rooted in excellence in service delivery, and regeneration to fund more and better social housing; stimulate growth; create jobs; and generate funding for public services. An asset-driven financial strategy was guided by a determination to establish as much financial independence as possible to shield us from falling funding.

Throughout these challenging times, and right up to the present day, every member of staff has demonstrated the same ambition: to make a positive impact on the lives of our residents and our borough, guided by our value of treating residents as valued members of our own family. We are a supporter and enabler of the incredible communities we serve.

As London's biggest council landlord with almost 40,000 tenants we have a unique relationship with many of our residents, with 27 percent living in council rented homes, the highest proportion in the country. Indeed, 40 percent of our residents live in social rented homes, the second highest proportion in the country.

Our focus on children and young people is demonstrated through consistently strong service provision and the quality of the borough's schools. Schools have been on a significant improvement journey - 98 percent of schools in the borough are excellent or good. Our young people continue to shine, with the most recent summer GCSE results showing their achievements positively bucking national trends. We were proud to be rated 'Good' for our Children's Services in our last Ofsted in September 2022, where we were told that children are at the heart of practice in Southwark and children's lives are improved as a result of our impact.

As well as high quality schools and social care provision, local people enjoy hundreds of services

that are for everyone, including 363 parks and open spaces, 30 of which have been awarded Green Flags; a growing number of modern and welcoming libraries; and a recently insourced leisure service with eight leisure centres. Our borough is fortunate to enjoy and continue to attract excellent universities and colleges; quality employers; enviable NHS services and unrivalled support from our varied voluntary and community organisations.

The council's work benefits from this rich local network of sector-leading partners and businesses, and vibrant communities underpinned with a strong tapestry of VCS and faith organisations.

Team Southwark

Team Southwark is driven by the people and communities we serve. Guided by shared corporate and political values, we demand the very best for them, from ourselves, our partners, businesses and regional and national Government.

Southwark is characterised by strong and driven political Leadership. Cllr Kieron Williams was elected Leader in September 2020, and returned in 2022 with an increased majority for the Labour administration, which has been in place since 2010.

Joined by Althea Loderick as the Chief Executive in May 2022, the partnership has worked with a high performing Cabinet and Corporate Management Team to build on Southwark's considerable strengths.

Following the local elections last year, the organisation worked swiftly to operationalise the administration's manifesto into a **Council Delivery Plan (CDP)** which guides the council's work. This has been supported by a new system of politically-led informal governance, which has a laser focus on delivery plan outcomes and performance.

Key Facts

Southwark is a densely populated and diverse inner London borough situated on the south bank of the River Thames, with Lambeth to the west and Lewisham to the east.

Southwark is a patchwork of communities: from leafy Dulwich, to bustling Peckham and Camberwell, and the rapidly changing Rotherhithe peninsula. Towards the north, Borough and Bankside are thriving with high levels of private investment and development. Yet there remain areas affected by high levels of disadvantage, where health outcomes fall short of what any resident should expect.

Our population is young, diverse and growing, with large numbers of young adults and residents from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds

- The average age (32.4 years) is more than two years younger than London, and almost seven years younger than England
- Around half (51 percent) of people living in Southwark have a White ethnic background compared to 81 percent nationally
- The largest ethnic group other than White is 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African', accounting for one-quarter (25 percent) of Southwark residents
- Southwark has one of the largest Latin American Communities in the country, predominantly made up of Colombians and Ecuadorians living around Elephant and Castle
- The last census found that over 80 languages are spoken in the borough, with 79 percent of the population speaking English as their main language
- There were over 40 distinct religions identified among Southwark residents

- Southwark has the 4th largest LGBTQI+ population in England, with 8 percent of residents (nearly 21,000 people) aged 16+ identifying as non-heterosexual. Southwark also has the 5th largest trans/non-binary population in England
- Over 18,000 residents provide some level of unpaid care, equivalent to 6 percent of Southwark's population

Towards 2030

In seeking to build on the council's strengths, the Leader and Cabinet have set out a distinctive 'People Power' agenda. Driving this approach is the determination that communities must be able to shape the places they live in and make decisions about issues that affect their lives.

With the Council Delivery Plan guiding daily work and focus, three significant initiatives are already exemplifying the People Power agenda - the development of a 2030 Strategy, our Streets for People Strategy and our Neighbourhoods programme.

Throughout 2023, local residents, organisations, businesses and communities have come together to work towards creating a Southwark 2030 Strategy. Over 2,000 residents and a range of organisations have taken part in this work so far.

Guided by a partner design group chaired by the Chief Executive, the emerging 2030 Strategy marks the first time in over a decade that partners have worked together on developing a place-based vision for Southwark. This process has deepened already strong partner relationships throughout Southwark. We are working towards a truly partnership document ready for agreement next spring.

Transformation of the council's purpose and delivery methods have been consolidated into a programme led by members of the Corporate Management Team and driven by strong political direction. The programme is being designed to deliver a practical and cultural shift and is driven by a belief that Southwark can only address the ongoing inequalities in the borough and improve outcomes when the whole organisation and wider partnership works together as a system.

The programme consists of three work streams: People Power, Closing the Gap and Neighbourhoods. To make real our commitments to moving to a 'One Council' approach, the council has built cross-organisational leadership into the governance and oversight of these three transformational programmes.

Closing the Gap is being led by David Quirke-Thornton (Strategic Director - Children and Adults), People Power by Clive Palfreyman, (Strategic Director - Finance) and Neighbourhoods by Caroline Bruce (Strategic Director - Environment, Neighbourhoods and Growth).

Being People Powered is about putting residents at the heart of everything we do. At its core it is about a fundamentally different relationship between residents and the council. It is also about empowering staff and shifting our organisational culture so that collaboration is a default and staff feel they have the agency they need to make a difference.

The Closing the Gap programme is about working to tackle inequality, poverty, racism and discrimination, as well as the specific inequalities in health, education, housing and employment that mean some residents are currently falling through the gap. In partnership with Impact on Urban Health we are currently undertaking

a comprehensive research study to understand the real and current impact of inequalities for residents in our borough. This is due to be finalised in October.

Southwark is committed to a neighbourhoods approach, so people feel empowered and involved in shaping the places they live, work, study and visit. The Neighbourhoods programme is about ensuring that the essentials of life are close by.

Within the Neighbourhoods programme we are developing 10 neighbourhood areas each of which is being co-led by two directors from different parts of the organisation.

Each neighbourhood will have a vision and an action plan, a pot of funding which can be directed to local priorities, a strengthened role for councillors and a renewed role for voluntary, community and faith sector anchor organisations.

There is strong political and organisational oversight of every transformation priority. Overall, the three programmes, alongside other major programmes, are subject to discussion and development via our new Corporate Portfolio Board. This was established in July 2023 to provide space for the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to exercise collective leadership and take an active role in steering the most important cross-cutting programmes in the organisation. Each of the three programmes also has a dedicated programme manager to support delivery.

Underpinning our ambition for everyone in Southwark is our commitment to tackle inequality and racial injustice.

In 2020, the communities of Southwark came together to launch Southwark Stands Together (SST), our plan for addressing racial injustice and being an anti-racist borough. The aims of the Southwark Stands Together programme are far reaching, bringing together the police, health partners, staff, the community and voluntary sector, residents, businesses and all those invested in our borough. The programme is shaped around a number of core work streams that came from conversations with our communities after the murder of George Floyd.

Since its inception, SST has led to a number of significant changes. We've commissioned the community organisation Forum for Equality and Human Rights in Southwark (FEHRS) to act as a 'critical friend' to support and challenge us. FEHRS helps to ensure our policies are as fair as possible.

During 2022-2023, we established a new SST Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Corporate Management Team, to ensure that progress in delivering SST continues to be overseen by the most senior leaders of the council's workforce.

A number of projects have already been delivered, with real impact on the lives of local residents. Our Arts Board Diversification Programme has supported Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents to take up Special Independent Director and Trustee roles with 11 organisations in the borough. The participating arts organisations have created Special Independent Director (SID) places on their boards as part of their own journeys towards more inclusive governance practice.

This summer we showcased the work of seven incredible artists from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds who had taken part in our I Create programme. Funding was allocated to seven aspiring talents to help address the under-representation of creatives from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds in the arts. The artists were paired with mentors from well-known Southwark-based cultural organisations such as Bold Tendencies, Central School of Ballet, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Tate Modern, and Theatre Peckham. The mentors played a crucial role in supporting the artists' creative development during the year.

We are partnering with Olmec, an award winning Black and Minoritised Communities led race equality organisation, and other local authorities (Islington, Richmond, Westminster and Wandsworth) to provide our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic **staff** the opportunity to become a Board Member through the Black on Board Programme. Black on Board is a governance training programme for organisations investing in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff designed to train and mentor participants onto board positions. Olmec's focus is people of colour from Black, Asian, Latin American and Arabic communities to address under representation of these communities at board level.

We have co-designed a new equalities grant fund worth £400k, of which £200k is ring-fenced for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic led organisations. We also launched the Southwark Pioneers Fund to support people who are under-represented in entrepreneurship to start and grow their enterprise, including minority ethnic businesses.

Our broader equality mission is guided by the Southwark Equality Framework, which focuses our work on six priorities: Leading Equalities, Knowing Our Communities, Working with You, Working for You, Equalities in Commissioning and Procurement and A Skilled, Representative and Valued Workforce.

We are currently working with independent EDI experts to complete a comprehensive EDI review and audit, which is designed to provide a 360 degree assessment of what we're doing well and where there are gaps or issues we need to address. This work, which will be finalised in November 2023, includes a specific focus on leadership so the findings will provide us with an opportunity to recognise and reflect on our leadership strengths and how we want to develop and build our leadership capability.

Internally, staff networks have been established. We are developing a new, co-designed ethnicity pay gap strategy that will set out, in detail, why the council has an ethnicity pay gap and how we will work with staff to narrow it.

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Local priorities and outcomes

There are two key elements governing the council's planning and delivery; the here and now and our long term vision for the future.

The first is reflected in the **Council Delivery Plan 2022-26 (CDP)** which informs the day-to-day priorities of the organisation. The second is the process through which we are looking at what we need to deliver by the end of the decade - Southwark 2030. Both are grounded in the aspirations of our people.

The Council Delivery Plan details the organisational priorities over the course of the current four-year term of the administration. Titled "Fairer, Greener, Safer", it is based on seven themes:

1. Transforming our borough
2. A thriving and inclusive economy
3. A healthy environment
4. Quality, affordable homes
5. Keeping you safe
6. Investing in communities
7. Supporting families

These themes describe how the council responds to local priorities – tackling the rising cost of living, building more council homes, reducing carbon emissions, creating new jobs and opportunities and protecting the borough's mental and physical health. The plan also makes clear how the council will deliver on priorities – supporting our young people to succeed at school, ensuring our older people are cared for, keeping our streets clean and ensuring our homes and neighbourhoods are safe and well looked after.

The CDP was informed by large scale and detailed research, and the administration's manifesto. This research included Understanding Southwark, a piece of research commissioned by the council with Social Life; Life after COVID, a

2021 piece of research in partnership with The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) involving nearly 3,000 people who live and work in the borough, and Survey of Londoners, a survey and field work carried out by Ipsos Mori for the Greater London Authority.

Progress against the CDP is monitored through quarterly Performance Sessions led by members of Cabinet and relevant lead officers on the Corporate Management Team. This is then fed upwards to the 'Leader's Board' which takes place monthly. An annual report for 2022/23 was reported to Cabinet in October 2023.

From the CDP, service plans and business plans are developed and individual officer work plans are agreed, with performance targets agreed at every level. Detailed budgets are aligned to corresponding plans following a robust budget challenge process, which challenges managers to demonstrate efficiency and value for money. Performance is monitored and managed at every level on a regular basis.

The performance management process helps to identify learning and development needs, which are translated into personal development plans for staff. Members are also offered development opportunities, with a programme of learning and development available to officers and members.

Good quality homes

The council's overarching focus for many years has been to put the infrastructure in place so that residents are able to live happy, rewarding lives. Where residents need more support to do that, we will do our best to provide it.

The council is very proud to be the leading council house builder in England. Over one third of all council homes built in England in 2021 were built in Southwark.

We launched a long-term approach to building new council homes in January 2013, and met our target of starting construction of delivering 2,500 new council homes by May 2022. We have plans to build 1,000 more by 2026.

We have approved high levels of social rented units in the past year, with nearly half of all units from major schemes being affordable homes rather than market rented units. 59 percent of major housing schemes this year provided genuinely affordable homes, far exceeding the 35 percent target – with 49 percent being available for social rent and 10 percent for intermediate rent. 1,085 social rented homes have received planning consent in the last year, with an additional 291 intermediate homes approved.

A total of 1,632 social rented units have started construction on site in the past year with 458 from council-led projects.

Like all social housing providers, the council has significant challenges with its social housing precipitated by the rent cap, new legislation and duties, the drive to net zero, stock condition, inflation and cost of borrowing, the general economic outlook for our tenants, and industry wide skills shortages. These issues are presented at scale in Southwark due to the size and age of our housing stock.

We recognise significant issues within our housing repairs service, which we are acting to transform, with a recent report to **Cabinet** setting out the council's approach. We have had some successes but for a range of important reasons, including the Covid19 pandemic, we have not made as much progress as we have wanted.

We know residents are frustrated by the slow progress, and we are determined to drive things forward quickly so that they start to see a positive difference. We believe that the service is now

turning a corner, with rising satisfaction and a new resident led improvement board driving progress alongside our Cabinet lead.

The Repairs Improvement Residents' Board (RIRB) was established following a council commitment to empower council tenants and residents. An external independent partner was appointed to support the council in the initial set up of the board and then to provide support to the board throughout the programme. The RIRB was set up after an expression of interest through an online panel of residents and will have a key role in assisting with improvements for the repairs service improvement plan.

We are reviewing the financial strategy for our HRA to take into account the significant national and local challenges. We know, however, that housing will continue to take significant organisation wide focus and capacity. Members of CMT are actively leading this process and a new Strategic Director for Housing is being recruited.

Cost of living support

In 2022, as more residents found it harder to manage, we introduced a Cost-of-Living Fund. By spring this year, the council had distributed more than £30m in cost-of-living support to more than one hundred thousand households. The fund was created by merging Government grants and topping them up from the council's reserves.

Because Government Cost of Living support was payable in irregular lump sums, the council filled gaps between payment dates by providing extra support for more than thirty thousand low-income households on means-tested benefits. Holiday free school meals continued throughout the year, and, in the winter, we provided extra help for those receiving council domiciliary care, arguably the most vulnerable of all our residents.

We set up a cross-council Communications and Engagement group, replicating the model used throughout the pandemic, to deliver comprehensive plans to ensure residents were aware of the support available to them, adjusting and responding in real time to feedback from VCS partners. We ran a Cost of Living Summit for partners, and a resident webinar to help spread the word about support, as well as working with VCS partners to set up more than forty Warm Spaces across the borough.

A strong and focussed partnership between the council, health and VCS was at the heart of delivery. The centrepiece of the council's Cost of Living response was the community referral pathway, to help us reach low-income households not claiming welfare benefits. The council worked with schools and dozens of community VCS partners who could refer vulnerable people who were known to them or who they encountered, for support from the Cost-of-Living Fund.

Partners were recruited with the support of **Community Southwark** – the umbrella organisation for the VCS. Fifteen thousand referrals were made between October and March and eighty percent of those referred received payments of £100. Cabinet received a full **evaluation report**.

The council has a strong history of tackling food insecurity together with our partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector. We are proud to be one of only four councils in London to be recognised as cross-cutting leaders in our food work as part of the recently published Good Food for All Londoners report. As a council there has been a long standing commitment to offering support to families through the offer of free, healthy school meals, which is now in place for all nursery and primary pupils. This support is being extended to some secondary school pupils whilst the Mayor of London's primary school support is in place.

Leisure insourcing

As an example of our values-led approach to service delivery, Southwark Council made the decision to insource its leisure services at the end of the contract with the then incumbent, Everyone Active. This decision was taken in order to better align the leisure offer with the council's wider health and well-being offer across, for example, public health, adult and children's services, as well as the wider integrated health system, and to provide better employment for leisure centre team members.

Services were transferred in house in the summer of 2023. This was a complex, whole council project. Outcomes achieved include;

- a new standalone leisure ICT system, which interfaced with other council systems and processes
- transfer of 350 staff through the TUPE process
- transfer of 19,000 leisure members
- development of a financial target operating model and financial reporting system
- capital asset review, 5 year asset lifecycle plan and development of funding bids to address under-investment in facilities

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Organisational and place leadership

There is a strong and effective partnership between members and officers, with clarity on delivery provided by the Council Delivery Plan.

The administration operates in a consensual decision making manner, bringing borough wide representation to decision making. Officer leadership is set up to support this approach, which leads to robust governance and deep political buy in, particularly on contentious issues.

There are clear targets and plans to work towards becoming a net zero borough, with the council meeting its target to halve its operational council emissions in 2022. Renewable electricity is being rolled out in schools and communal areas of housing estates. Over 1,000 council homes have been retrofitted to make them greener, improve their energy efficiency and make them cheaper to run.

Our ground-breaking **Streets for People Strategy** was agreed in July 2023 with a clear vision for 2030. Pledges include ensuring that all homes will be within 200m of a safe and pleasant walking route; local schools will have a "School Street" or other new safety measures; bikes will gain access to a cycle hangar within six months of applying; and each neighbourhood will have parking spaces for cycles, e-bikes, hire cars and electric vehicles.

Child mental health

In 2018 we undertook a joint review with the former Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group of mental health services for children and young people aged 0-25 in the borough. This showed a shortfall for those who needed extra support with their mental health but did not meet the criteria for specialist services. We heard from young people about their struggle to get help. This

informed our decision to set up an early support hub for young people with low-level mental health problems, such as anxiety and stress. Our aim was to reduce the number of young people reaching crisis point, and make it available to all children in the borough who are experiencing mental health problems. We are working to make support available in all schools.

Local young people helped us design and name our service **The Nest**, which supports children, involving their whole family, through to individual children and young people up to the age of 25 years old and bespoke support for parents and carers, as well as a dedicated team that works in schools across Southwark. In 2022-2023, 373 children used the Nest walk-in service.

Employment and skills

The council has stepped in to establish a locally-delivered employment and skills system, providing support to help residents into work and to progress in work.

The front door to this local system is Southwark Works, the council's employment support programme and a key channel through which the council delivers its ambition to create a thriving and inclusive economy. Unlike the Job Centre, the service is free from conditionality, providing help for anyone who wants to find a job, not just those in receipt of particular benefits. Between 2019 and 2022 a total of 3,681 people were supported into a job, apprenticeship, or training, with over half of those starting jobs.

Southwark Works is delivered by a network of third sector providers rooted in the local community, who offer a range of tailored employment support based on underlying needs, such as mental health, homelessness or disability. The programme integrates two main elements.

For residents, it offers employment support tailored to the needs of different cohorts. For employers it provides a free recruitment service, helping them match their vacancies with local residents and to successfully employ people who face challenges entering and progressing in the workplace.

An independent evaluation of Southwark Works found that it outperformed similar national programmes for all of its client groups, with a higher rate of people starting a job or apprenticeship. Crucially, the evaluation also revealed that residents feel that Southwark Works has had a great positive impact on their mental wellbeing, demonstrating the broader impact of a holistic employment service.

Southwark has run a successful and award-winning apprenticeship programme for nearly 15 years. We are one of the top 100 apprentice employers and 25 per cent of all apprenticeships in London are created by Southwark. Over the next three years we plan to recruit 100 interns across the council. This programme is for our young residents aged 16-24 who may be struggling to get on the career ladder in order to make their way in the world. This is part of the council's wider commitment in the Council Plan to get 500 internships for young people from low income backgrounds

Since opening its doors, the **Southwark Construction Skills Centre** has developed its reputation and standing within the local community and wider construction industry and over 6,000 Southwark residents have attended a range of construction skills training. Nearly 500 Southwark residents have secured apprenticeships, over 1,300 have started jobs and over 2,000 existing construction employees have increased their skills and qualifications.

A key commitment in our Council Delivery Plan, our Living Wage Unit is driving efforts to double the number of accredited London Living Wage

employers headquartered in Southwark from a baseline of 269 to 498 over 4 years. The number of accredited employers has increased to 311 in the first 18 months.

As London's first Living Wage Place, our actions are coordinated through a steering group of committed partners including businesses, universities and community campaigning groups who each make business engagement and advocacy commitments under a shared action plan. Our own commitments include leading the reaccreditation of Southwark as a Living Wage Place, increasing targeted communications resources, and launching a grant scheme to cover the cost of accreditation for smaller employers.

We are working with Lambeth council to create SC1, a Life Sciences Innovation District spanning both boroughs.

Our goal is to make the district a world-recognised home for transformative innovation in life sciences. Health equity is at the heart of SC1 and we are planning to use creative, public-private partnerships to develop solutions to complex healthcare challenges and to improve life for our local communities and society as a whole.

The seven partners behind the project are: King's College London; Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust; King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust; Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation; Lambeth Council and Southwark Council.

Borough of Sanctuary

The council is ambitious about being a place that welcomes migrants and refugees to our borough, working with local communities to welcome and support people fleeing persecution, conflict and disasters from across the world despite the challenges and pressures this brings. According to Home Office data on those receiving asylum

support Southwark has 2,363 - the second highest number in London after Hillingdon. This represents almost 10% of those receiving asylum support in London. Alongside this we have high numbers of people presenting with No Recourse to Public Funds, and we have welcomed people evacuated from Afghanistan and a significant number of refugees from Ukraine.

We are working through the process of becoming an officially recognised borough of sanctuary. Over the past year alone we have:

- Provided direct support to 756 refugee households (total of 1456 individuals including 556 children). This was an 89 percent 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

Place Making

For many years Southwark's reputation was linked to controversial regeneration projects. Under the Leader and Cabinet, there has been a discernible shift of focus towards resident-led regeneration. We have held two ballots on the Ledbury and Tustin estates, with residents voting for major redevelopment.

The Ledbury Estate redevelopment is a hugely ambitious regeneration project which will provide 340 new homes and transform the estate and surrounding area. In 2021, residents voted in favour of demolishing the four towers on the estate which were no longer safe, in favour of building 265 new council homes and 75 private sale homes. Underpinned by residents' input, wider engagement and a social value programme tailored for the community, this project exemplifies our goals to provide more council homes in the borough and bring social and economic benefits for local people.

In keeping with our commitment to moving towards Net Zero carbon, the Ledbury project exceeds local environmental policy, achieving 89 percent carbon emissions savings through fabric first interventions, connection to the South East London Combined Heat and Power (SELCHP) network, and the use of photovoltaic panels.

Given our central London location, the council seeks to use the potential of development to benefit local people by creating homes, jobs, transport improvements and other positive changes.

Old Kent Road's central London location means that over 400 business are based there, 9,000 people work locally, and 35,000 people live along its three mile length. We are building on Old Kent Road's strengths with a 20 year programme of investment that will deliver tangible benefits for the local community. 20,000 high quality new homes will be built. 35 percent of all new housing will be affordable, a minimum of 15 percent of which must be social rent equivalent homes and 20 percent affordable rent capped at London Living rent equivalent.

Lendlease's **Elephant Park** is one of two major schemes in the council-led regeneration of Elephant and Castle. Overall, the programme will deliver at least 5,000 new and replacement homes for the neighbourhood and create 10,000 new jobs.

Elephant has a rich, cultural tradition and the redevelopment has built upon this by providing more arts, leisure, cultural and community facilities. A new council leisure centre; a new council heritage centre and library; plus a new Southwark Playhouse theatre, have already been delivered.

The project is also creating a more environmentally sustainable future for Elephant and Castle. New transport infrastructure, new and better parks, open spaces and pedestrianisation have already started to shift the neighbourhood's focus away from cars and towards public transport, cycling and walking. A new Northern line tube station and, potentially, the Bakerloo Line extension, will cement the neighbourhood's reputation as one of the best connected locations in London.

The council has played a leading role in securing a commitment to the Bakerloo Line extension in London Councils' new infrastructure framework. The scheme would unlock over 110,000 new homes and 130,000 jobs across the capital. Technical work to prepare for the Bakerloo line extension continues, laying the way for Southwark, Lewisham and TfL to seek government approval for the scheme via the Transport and Works Act in 2025. In Old Kent Road alone, an extension to the Bakerloo Line would enable substantial further growth, with the number of homes rising from 14,500 to 34,500 and the number of jobs rising from 9,500 to 20,000.

In Canada Water, British Land is redeveloping 53 acres of brownfield land to deliver a new town centre, which will include a new high street and town square. Located in former docklands, this scheme will create up to 3,000 new homes, including 1,000 affordable homes; 2 million sq. ft. of workspace and 16 acres of new parks and open public space

As well as delivering much needed new homes (of all tenures) both the Elephant and Castle

and Canada Water schemes are creating huge benefits for the local community in terms of new infrastructure, better public realm, community facilities and improved public transport.

Strong Partnerships

Southwark Council is a well-connected and well-regarded partner and leader within the borough. The development of the 2030 Strategy, and the response to the COVID and cost of living crises have deepened and enhanced existing relationships. A new approach to establishing an Anchor Network of key institutions in the borough was developed earlier this year, and is forming strong relationships as a key strategic partnership group.

One of the commitments in the Council Delivery Plan is to transform the way we work with Southwark's community and faith groups. We recognise that it is important to support a sustainable, confident and resourceful voluntary sector that can work alongside the public and private sector to deliver the best outcomes for our residents. This is evidenced by the scale of our ongoing investment in the sector with around £20 million of grants and contracts with VCS organisations, and by the strength of our partnerships.

We recognise there is still much to do and recently undertook two independent reviews of our grant making and funding of the VCS. One of these was focused on barriers that Black and Minority Ethnic led groups have in accessing funding opportunities and came out of our Southwark Stands Together conversations with local residents.

We have a long history of bringing organisations together to develop joint responses to the challenges we face. Significant examples include our Young People's Mental Health Commission and our Land Commission where we have

been able to bring together key local partners, including the NHS, TfL, local schools and religious organisations and significant key private sector employers in the borough.

The Southwark Land Commission was established in 2022 to explore how more land in the borough can be used for the benefit of all. Bringing together a wide range of independent experts, community groups, academics and landowner representatives, the commission led a collaborative process of panel discussions, workshops, community events and discussion sessions with local groups and landowners to explore and identify areas of land which could be better utilised for social purpose.

The resulting report, **Land for Good**, was published in September 2023, with a key recommendation to establish a social purpose for land framework to put social purpose at the heart of land use.

Southwark's distinctive approach to practical partnership working can be evidenced by the 'Here to Help' programme. This was established in response to the cost of living crisis and involved working with a range of voluntary sector partners including Community Southwark, Citizens Advice Southwark and the Southwark food alliance to support those in greatest need.

Our **Health and Well-being Board** coalesces around a shared Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Following the establishment of the ICB, the council and health are working to integrate services. The council and ICB have agreed to appoint a shared Strategic Director of Health and Social Care, with recruitment starting imminently.

We have a particularly strong relationship both with our Police BCU and the MPS centrally and this extends not just to sharing of information, co-ordination on emergency planning and safeguarding but working closely together on issues like violence against women and girls, joint

work on serious violence, combatting drugs and wider social issues.

We have well-developed mechanisms for joint tasking of police and council resources to deal with emerging issues and use both police and local authority assets and powers to deal with specific issues. The maturity of the relationship means a good level of challenge in both directions and there are many examples of where this has produced results including our strong work with young people around their relationship with the Police. Our Young Advisors have trained police officers and challenged them on police encounters such as stop and search, not only working with local officers but Met Units centrally, such as TSG and Firearms Officers.

We are currently engaged in a joint series of policing conversations with our local communities about their expectations of how they are policed, part of which is taking the police on a journey testing better ways of engaging with our communities locally. Being a good partner also means being prepared to be challenging and a critical friend, and that's what we're prepared to do in our relationship – holding the Police to account on behalf of our local communities and supporting them to be better.

Whilst core relationships are strong, as with the rest of London, there are challenges created by the absence of co-terminosity and by the significant individual challenges faced by the Met Police and NHS.

Governance in Southwark is based on consistent and appropriate behaviours, not process alone. There is clear and highly functional political governance, supported by a strong and experienced senior management team. The political leadership take ownership of decision making within a strong governance and financial framework which members understand and appreciate.

Driven by the council leadership, we are opening ourselves up to more challenge and criticism, and to having difficult conversations with communities and partners. There is significant time and space for public questions and contributions at public meetings – over the past year we have heard 67 delegations at public meetings, demonstrating a productive and open process to hearing what residents and groups think.

We are also making democracy visible in our communities and earlier this year took our Cabinet meeting to the Brandon Estate at the Jack Hobbs Centre, a local community hub that has been improved following work with a partnership of resident organisations. The Brandon Estate is a special place for many – it has faced some significant challenges over the years, and through pro-active work by the community with the council there is now greater community activity and pride in the place.

We have a culture of transparency when things go wrong and seek to deal with issues openly. This can be evidenced by recent issues with the creation of low traffic neighbourhoods where the council has been openly reflective.

Officer informal governance is well established, with weekly Corporate Management Team Meetings, monthly Directors Forums and a cross council Leadership Network for managers.

Following the election in 2022, the council revised its informal governance arrangements into a member-led structure shaped around

regular performance challenge sessions, Lead Member briefing meetings, a Leaders Board and Strategic Policy Board.

The Overview and Scrutiny committee and its scrutiny commissions scrutinise decisions made by the cabinet, and those delegated to officers, and review services provided by the council and its partners. Their in-depth **reviews** from the past year were recently reported to the council's Cabinet.

Challenge is also offered by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, which provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the council's governance arrangements, including its standards regime, the risk management framework and the associated control environment.

Southwark's culture has long been based around the delivery of excellent services, underpinned by strong values. The determination to deliver for our residents is the golden thread that runs through everyone at Southwark Council. We recognise, however, that in seeking to deliver the best possible services that our culture can sometimes feel paternalistic.

At its heart, people power is therefore about a fundamentally different relationship between residents and the council. We recognise in moving to a more relational, people powered model that we need to develop an organisational approach which empowers staff and shifts our organisational culture so that collaboration is a default and staff feel they have the agency to make a difference.

The council has invested in a new role of Director of People and Organisational Development who is working to develop a new People Strategy early next year. This will follow our first staff survey since 2018, which launched in September 2023 to ensure that colleagues feel valued and listened to. The new strategy will review and renew our values and behaviours and ensure staff can contribute to the future workplace.

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Financial planning and management

The council has robust financial governance arrangements with regular management and public reporting of its financial position and has a clearly defined approach to dealing with the challenges it faces. From 2024-25 onwards, the council will be publishing a 3-year budget plan underpinned by a supporting financial strategy that was presented to our October 2023 Cabinet (enroute to Council Assembly in November).

In previous years, a 1 year budget was adopted, but going forwards the organisation will be looking to use a longer planning time-frame as a basis to look at organisation-wide and transformational savings and growth opportunities.

The council's General Fund revenue budget has consistently balanced over the years and the council has built a prudent level of General Fund reserves over this period. Whilst the council has a substantial amount of external debt, this is largely a consequence of its ambitious housebuilding programme and is proportionate to the income stream supporting it. We are seeing continued demand and cost pressures in homelessness services, for those who have no recourse to public funds, and in the costs of providing transport to SEND children. Borrowing remains well within prudential indicator limits.

Currently, there are too many households living in temporary accommodation and the council plans to build new council homes to give families somewhere secure and affordable to live. In order to keep building new council homes, the council is exploring new sources of funding, in addition to borrowing from government. Specific challenges such as the Housing Revenue Account, High Needs pressures and Temporary Accommodation overspends are being tackled through the use of focussed 'Budget Recovery Boards'. These provide an enhanced level of support and scrutiny to challenging areas and engage senior professional colleagues from across the organisation to develop and implement solutions.

Indeed, our Housing Revenue Account is where our greatest financial pressures lie. Our 2022/23 outturn left us with c. £19m reserves and our most recent Monitoring Report to Cabinet for delivery of the 23/24 budget was forecasting a £13m+ pressure in addition to a capital pressure which will place further revenue cost onto the HRA in 24/25. The council is considering immediate financial interventions to mitigate our in year pressure and also to return the HRA to balance in the mid-term. Addressing these challenges is a high priority cross-organisation activity.

The council is the largest council landlord in London and one of the biggest in the country. Safety is always the top priority. The council has drafted a new 'Asset Management Strategy', which responds to new building safety legislation and sets out the council's approach to investing in council homes, blocks and estates. This draft strategy also includes updating and 'greening' heat networks as well as moving forward with plans agreed by residents to rebuild the Tustin, Ledbury, and Aylesbury and Maydew estate.

We have undertaken a full review of our housing related capital programme (both General Fund and Housing Revenue Account) in the last 12 months. This has emphasised the need to reprioritise and re-programme works into an affordable envelope and timescale, particularly on the Housing Investment Programme. A report entitled '**Southwark Construction Strategic Plan**' was approved by cabinet in March 2023 and a similar report for the council's Asset Management Strategy is in train. Together, these documents set out how the council will continue to deliver new builds and maintain existing stock in an affordable, sustainable way.

Southwark Council's Fairer Future Procurement Framework (FFPF) sets out how the council will use its procurement to support the delivery of the Borough Plan and Fairer Future Commitments and the processes and practices that are needed to do this.

The Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission Report '**Climate Finance-Financing Southwark's Green Transition**' commended Southwark on the progress made in meeting its ambitious 2030 net zero target, with the weighted carbon intensity of the LBS pension fund reduced by 59 percent in the five years to 31 March 2022.



Strengthening our organisation: transformation capacity and priorities

We have good practice to build on from across the organisation. We excel in many areas of service provision, and are strengthening and growing communities of practice to support organic growth alongside strategic transformation programmes.

However, improvement and transformation capacity varies across the organisation. Over the past ten years the council has favoured more departmentally embedded improvement driven by departmental goals and priorities, with organisational impact captured through quarterly performance challenge meetings with Lead Members.

We recognise that organisational infrastructure and corporate capacity has not benefited from enough focus and investment. In seeking to develop corporate capacity, the Chief Executive quickly set out to strengthen the corporate centre and senior management team via two phases of senior management restructures in the past year.

The Corporate Management Team has been strengthened by the appointment of Assistant Chief Executives for Governance and Assurance, and for Strategy and Communities.

In recognition of the need to build corporate capacity, investment is being made in Strategy, Performance, HR, Change and Communications. This will be further bolstered by a council wide review of corporate resources, which has been completed over the summer and is now being readied for delivery. This work will seek to consolidate corporate functions in the council's corporate centre and bring common services together to create critical mass and greater efficiency.

Upon her arrival, the Chief Executive quickly identified the HR function as an important priority for improvement. A new post of Director of People and Organisational Development has been permanently appointed, bringing together the management of people resources with that of payroll and council buildings for the first time. Through a One People Service Transformation Programme, progress is being made to strengthen operational HR delivery and build the strategic capabilities required to achieve the council's new approach. This includes the establishment of new teams to support recruitment and organisational development.

One of the areas where significant development is needed is in data, intelligence and insight. At present all resource is dispersed throughout the council, and whilst there are high quality examples of work such as the JSNA, council and borough wide intelligence is more limited.

The council and its partners have recently made a circa £5 million bid to a national programme to allow us to develop a blueprint for intelligence and insight which will drive the resources review in these areas (whether the bid is successful or not).

We acknowledge that investment in the council's core IT infrastructure has fallen behind, and there is now a renewed focus on driving through a rapid improvement programme over the next twelve months.

One of the primary issues is WiFi connectivity, coverage and quality of service. With the first stage focussing on the Tooley St hub during the Autumn of 2023, contractors and partners are installing new cabling and wireless access points. That will resolve the issues of poor service. In addition a capital refresh programme is being brought forward to 2023/24 for a full laptop replacement, upgrade to windows 11 and Microsoft 365 implementation.



Conclusion and key questions

This is a critical time for Southwark as we commence our transformation programme and get ready to deliver our 2030 Strategy with partners.

We would particularly welcome feedback on these questions as part of the Corporate Peer Challenge Team's assessment:

1. How can we further bolster our partnership readiness to work together collaboratively and at pace to deliver the 2030 vision?
2. How can we further strengthen our council's culture in ways that empower, support and inspire our workforce to work in collaboration with our residents?
3. To achieve our collective ambitions, what more needs to be done to build organisational capacity and ways of working to enable us to move at pace?
4. What critical success factors should we consider as we embark on our transformation programme?
5. How might we better square the circle of being ambitious, innovative and a leading voice in local government with tackling the basics of providing consistently good services to residents?

