

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH 2024

PUBLIC QUESTION WITH RESPONSE

1. QUESTION FROM CHARMAINE GRAVES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES

Can the council confirm that it will reverse the policy change making it easier to sell off void council homes, and focus its attention on improving the funding formula, reducing mismanagement and waste, and making available the voided properties earmarked for sale to vulnerable residents?

RESPONSE

Disposal of derelict homes or commercial properties is always a last resort and Southwark Council has only previously disposed of empty properties that are financially unsustainable to bring back in to use - this will continue to be the case. If a home or property is too expensive to repair and maintain in the long term it becomes an overall drain on our resources and means we can't provide the same level of service, or invest as much in new homes, in the future.

In addition to this, there are currently unprecedented external financial pressures on our housing budget. For the past 8 years, successive governments have imposed rent caps, rent reductions and new regulations on councils but haven't provided funding to fill the gaps. The combination of this, and the recent unprecedented rise in interest rates and inflation, thanks in part to the Conservatives' reckless mini-budget, has had an enormous impact.

In this context, officers must act nimbly to ensure we maintain the strongest possible budget and that any income from these last-resort disposals are used to bring more homes back in to use, more quickly. Therefore, receipts from sale of housing land and properties will be reinvested in maintaining existing council homes, ensuring our residents live in a safe and secure home.