

Meeting Name:	Council Assembly
Date:	20 November 2024
Report title:	Members' Motions
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	Not applicable
From:	Proper Constitutional Officer

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The councillor introducing or “moving” the motion may make a speech directed to the matter under discussion. This may not exceed five minutes¹. A second councillor will then be asked by the Mayor to “second” the motion. This may not exceed three minutes without the consent of the Mayor.

The meeting will then debate the issue and any amendments on the motion will be dealt with. At the end of the debate, the mover of the motion may make a concluding speech, known as a “right of reply”. If an amendment is carried, the mover of the amendment shall hold the right of reply to any subsequent amendments and, if no further amendments are carried, at the conclusion of the debate on the substantive motion.

The Mayor will then ask councillors to vote on the motion (and any amendments).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The constitution allocates responsibility for particular functions to council assembly, including approving the budget and policy framework, and allocates to the cabinet responsibility for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of council services on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, council assembly without prior reference to the cabinet cannot decide upon any matters that are reserved to the cabinet (i.e. housing, social services, regeneration, environment, education etc.) While it would be in order for council assembly to discuss an issue, consideration of any of the following should be referred to the cabinet:

- to change or develop a new or existing policy
- to instruct officers to implement new procedures
- to allocate resources.

¹ Council assembly procedure rule 1.14 (9)

Note: In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.10 (8) & (9) (prioritisation and rotation by the political groups) the order in which motions appear in the agenda may not necessarily be the order in which they are considered at the meeting.

1. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS (Seconded by Councillor Sam Dalton)

Supporting Older People this Winter

1. Council Assembly notes:
 - a. The difficult position that many residents – especially pensioners – find themselves in when paying bills in the winter months.
 - b. Since 2010, the impact of Conservative and Liberal Democrat cruel and misguided austerity measures have left many of our older residents having to make the real and very difficult decision as to whether to heat their homes or eat.
 - c. The new Labour Government has inherited a £22 billion black hole in the nation’s finances from the previous Government.
 - d. Since the start of the Cost of Living crisis in 2021, this Labour council has distributed financial help worth more than £53 million to Southwark residents. That support has reached more than one hundred thousand residents – with more support going to those on lowest incomes and those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of rising food and fuel costs.
 - e. That since the summer of 2022, with the support of our Consortium of Older People’s Services in Southwark (COPSINS) organisations, the council ran a campaign to increase both awareness of and the take up of Pension Credit which resulted in an additional 900 pension aged households being added to the Pension Credit roll in Southwark.
 - f. That according to the most recent official statistics for February 2024, which were published in August, Southwark had the largest Pension Credit claimant count of all of the South London Boroughs, despite it having one of the smallest pension age populations.
 - g. That the Southwark Energy Savers Scheme has helped support 560 residents with advice on their fuel bills this year and has generated income maximisation of over £660,000.
2. Council Assembly therefore:

- a. Welcomes the introduction of the government's £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October, the extension of the Household Support Fund of £1 billion and the maintenance of the Winter Fuel Allowance for 1.3 million households in England and Wales.
- b. Acknowledges this Labour administration's proactive response in ringfencing £380,000 of Household Support Fund for the purpose of supporting pensioners who fall just outside of Pension Credit eligibility. This will support around 1,200 pension age households not in receipt of Pension Credit, and who are on low incomes, with a one-off payment of £150. Other pensioners not in receipt of any means-tested benefits, who are struggling, at risk, or in crisis, will be supported with a £200 payment through a community referral scheme (Pensioners Referral Pathway) via our voluntary and community sector partners.
- c. Recognises and supports an additional one-off payment of £100 to residents receiving domiciliary care.
- d. Welcomes the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement in the Autumn Statement to an above inflation increase of 4.1% to the State Pension which gives over 12 million pensioners an additional £470 from next April.
- e. Welcomes the Pension Credit Standard minimum guarantee increase from £11,499 per year to £11,850 per year for a single pensioner.
- f. Asks Cabinet to ensure that the Pension Credit Campaign is advertised as widely as possible to encourage further take up this winter.
- g. Resolves to work with our voluntary partners to open up our warm hubs this winter, where elderly and vulnerable residents can come for a warm meal, a chat, and to receive free advice and sign-posting.
- h. Remains committed to supporting our older people and vulnerable residents as these changes take effect. The exchequer department are working closely with colleagues in Adult Services on the distribution of Cost of Living Support, including by identifying residents who are housebound or suffering from dementia or similar conditions to ensure tailored plans are in place as needed.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

2. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN (Seconded by Councillor Rachel Bentley)

Rethinking Winter Fuel Payment Cuts

1. Council Assembly notes:
 - a. the recent decision by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
 - b. Though some argue that universal Winter Fuel Payments should be means tested, the Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will now not receive the payments. Across England and Wales the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).
 - c. In Southwark the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 16,841. That means 69.2% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards. Around 4,500 of these pensioners are over 80 years old.
 - d. According to Policy in Practice, there are around 4,400 households in Southwark who are eligible to claim Pension Credit, and thus the Winter Fuel Payment, who do not currently claim it.
 - e. That the deadline for claiming Pension Credit to be eligible for the 2024/2025 Winter Fuel Payment is fast approaching on 21 December 2024.
 - f. This means from the day of Council Assembly to the Pension Credit deadline, an average of 141 households every day must successfully complete their applications in order for every eligible pensioner to receive the support they are entitled to – no taking into account any processing delays.
 - g. Existing work the council is doing to encourage uptake of pension credit for those who are eligible, but have not claimed it.
 - h. That the Household Support Fund (HSF), which funds Southwark's Cost of Living Fund, has been extended to April 2025.
 - i. Work that other councils, including Portsmouth, Richmond Upon Thames, Dorset, and Sutton, are doing to mitigate the impact of the Labour government's decision, using the HSF.

- j. That the Energy Price Cap rose by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.
 - k. Additional barriers to claiming pension credit – such as rules around pensioner couples (if only one is of pensionable age) and the fact that the threshold is nationwide, despite higher living costs in areas like London
 - l. Recent polling that shows 6 in 10 people think that this change is wrong
2. Council believes that:
- a. The Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.
3. Council resolves to:
- b. Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately reversed and introduce a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments.
 - c. Introduce a Winter Fuel Payment for Southwark pensioners which can be afforded, using at least the Cost of Living Fund, and which helps those most in need out of the pensioners who will no longer receive this payment from the Government, using the help offered by Sutton and Portsmouth councils as a benchmark
 - d. Accelerate efforts to sign up those who are eligible for pension credit to claim their Winter Fuel Payment before 21 December 2024 deadline.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

3. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MARGY NEWENS (Seconded by Councillor Reginald Popoola)

Right to Grow

- 1. Southwark Council notes:

- a. The Cost of Living crisis and the continued impact on Southwark residents.
 - b. Recovery from the pandemic brings a new focus on ensuring that residents have access to enough fresh food for day to day living.
 - c. The increasing need to put the health and well-being of residents at the heart of council policy.
 - d. The powerful evidence which demonstrates the link between people's health and wellbeing and the availability of fresh locally produced food.
 - e. That the cost-of-living crisis is creating real hunger, reinforcing the need for healthy fresh food at an affordable price.
 - f. That communities coming together to grow food and carry out wildlife gardening can radically reduce costs to NHS and social care budgets by reducing loneliness, improving access to nature and providing healthy food.
 - g. That there is under-used publicly owned land in the borough which could be used for community food growing and/or wildlife planting, while also improving the public realm.
2. Southwark Council agrees to, where possible, take a Right to Grow approach on council owned land which is suitable, or which could be de-paved and made suitable, or which could accommodate planters, for cultivation.
 3. As a result, Council Assembly asks Cabinet to consider:
 - a. Identifying and producing a map of council owned land suitable for community cultivation, including spaces that are currently covered by hard standing that could be de-paved and/or accommodate planters.
 - b. Exploring where land can be made available for cultivation by a simple license to community organisations at no cost, building upon the council's existing growing scheme.
 - c. Promoting the use of structurally suitable and accessible rooftops for growing.
 - d. Considering community food growing and wildlife gardening on sites awaiting development for other uses on a fixed term basis.

- e. Working with Southwark's MPs in supporting Southwark's community gardeners, the Incredible Edible campaign and national 'right to grow' campaign.
- f. Working with partners and stakeholders and encouraging anchor institutions and civil society to join it in the above endeavour.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

4. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE (Seconded by Councillor Jane Salmon)

Supporting the Climate and Nature Bill

1. Council Assembly notes
 - a. This summer, the world has witnessed the highest temperatures on record, with hundreds of excess deaths attributed to heat waves estimated in London alone in 2023, which was the second warmest summer on record in the UK.
 - b. Alongside this, there is the looming danger of the cost of living crisis with around 10% of Southwark residents living in fuel poverty, and the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment putting thousands of pensioners in Southwark at risk of struggling with energy costs.
 - c. Our over-reliance on fossil fuels and the need for a transition to renewable energy has never been so clear.
 - d. Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world. The global temperature has already increased by 1.3°C above pre-industrial levels, and the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction.
 - e. A recent UN Environment report found that there is currently no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place. In tandem with this, there is a severe biodiversity crisis.
 - f. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. More than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline.
 - g. If we fail to halt and, crucially, reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, we increase the risk of further pandemics, rising global temperatures and loss of species. The UK needs a legally

enforceable nature target so that, by 2030, nature is visibly and measurably on the path to recovery, in line with the Global Goal for Nature.

2. Council assembly further notes

- a. There is a Bill that was introduced into the current UK Parliament by Liberal Democrat Dr Roz Savage MP on 16 October 2024 - the Climate and Nature Bill - which, if it becomes law, would require the development of an integrated strategy to ensure that the UK's climate and environmental response is in line with the latest science.
- b. The Bill is the only proposed legislation before the UK Parliament that ensures a comprehensive approach to the joint climate and nature emergency.
- c. The Bill has been previously introduced by Green and Labour MPs under different parliamentary processes, but this is the first time the Bill will be given adequate parliamentary time, as this year's third 'Ballot Bill', and thus has the strongest chance of becoming law yet.
- d. It would ensure that:
 - i. The intertwined climate and nature crises is tackled in a joined-up way;
 - ii. The Paris Agreement aim is enshrined into law to ensure that the UK does its full and fair share to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C;
 - iii. The UK halts and reverses biodiversity loss by 2030 to ensure that the UK's ecosystems are protected and restored;
 - iv. The UK takes responsibility for its greenhouse gas footprint, including international aviation and shipping, and by accounting for consumption emissions related to the goods and services that are imported and consumed in the UK;
 - v. The UK takes responsibility for its ecological footprint in order to better protect the health and resilience of ecosystems, including along domestic and global supply chains; and
 - vi. No-one and no community is left behind in the just transition by providing retraining for those currently working

in fossil fuel industries; and

- vii. An independent, temporary Climate and Nature Assembly is set-up, representative of the UK population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the strategy. This would be setup on broadly similar lines to the Climate Assembly 2020 which was very successful and very well received on all sides of the political divide.
 - e. 186 MPs have publicly pledged their support for the Bill in both its current and previous incarnations, including 26 London MPs.
 - f. 372 councils have passed motions in support of previous and current versions of the Bill, including Camden, Ealing, Hackney, Islington, Lewisham, Richmond upon Thames, Westminster and the London Assembly. As far as can be ascertained, Southwark would be the first council to formally endorse the Climate and Nature Bill since its latest tabling in Parliament.
3. Council Assembly further recognises:
- a. Existing work Southwark Council has embarked on to play its role in tackling the climate and nature crises since declaring a climate emergency in 2019 – but recognises that work falls short both on its own terms, but also will be in vain without the national strategy the Bill will bring into place.
 - b. It is therefore in Southwark's interest for this bill to become law – to both achieve its own aims locally and play a part in the national and global fight against climate and ecological catastrophe.
4. Therefore, this council resolves to:
- a. Support the Climate and Nature Bill;
 - b. Inform local residents, and inform local press/media, of our motion;
 - c. Write to Southwark MPs about our motion, urging them to sign up to support the Bill, and requesting that they vote for the Bill at its second reading on 24 January 2025;
 - d. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing our official support (councils@zerohour.uk).

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

5. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR SAM FOSTER (Seconded by Councillor Laura Johnson)

Support Renters in Southwark

1. Council Assembly notes:
 - a. Private rents in Southwark are amongst the highest in the country increasing by 8.2% over the past year with the average rent now being £2,274 per month.
 - b. Spiralling private sector rents are one of the leading causes of homelessness in our borough and city, with 1 in 21 children in London now homeless, the equivalent of more than one in every classroom.
 - c. Some lettings agents in the borough have been engaging in unethical sales practices known as bidding wars, where they pit prospective tenants against each other, pressuring them to bid above the asking price.
 - d. We welcome the inclusion of a ban on bidding wars in the new government's Renters Rights Bill, and commend the work of ACORN, the community union, for their campaigns on this issue.
 - e. We also welcome the inclusion of proposed bans on huge above market rate rent hikes during tenancies, no fault evictions, and discriminating against tenants in receipt of benefits or with children in the new government's bill. These are changes that the council has long campaigned for alongside ACORN, Generation Rent, Shelter and many others.
 - f. We further note and welcome the council's work rolling out more protections for private renters through a selective private rented licencing scheme, which now covers the majority of Southwark
 - g. However, we recognise that more work needs to be done to address private renting affordability and quality in the borough, and that until this bill is passed, predatory letting agents will continue to increase rents as much as possible, pricing more people out of their homes.
2. Council Assembly resolves to ask Cabinet to:

- a. Support ACORN Southwark’s campaign to ‘Ban the Bids’ in the borough, and the call for an end to letting agents and landlords asking for, encouraging, or accepting bids above the advertised price for a private rented home.
- b. Contact lettings agents in Southwark that have not pledged to stop using bidding wars practices, as highlighted in ACORN’s campaign, asking them to stop.
- c. Write to the Minister for Housing and all Southwark MPs setting out the council’s support for the Renters Rights Bill.
- d. Extend the council’s successful selective private rented licencing scheme to cover the whole borough.
- e. Review the council’s support for private renters to ensure it is easy to access and effective and that the council is ready to start using the new powers in the Renters Rights Bill for local authorities to enforce higher standards in the private rented sector as soon they are enacted.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Member Motions	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Constitutional Team Constitutional.Team@southwark.gov.uk

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Chidilim Agada, Head of Constitutional Services
Report Author	Virginia Wynn-Jones, Principal Constitutional Officer
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