

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2010

MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS

Following the article in The Observer on Sunday 7 November which painted a bleak picture of how the coalition government cuts will affect one London borough, will the leader provide an update of how he thinks the council's role will change over the next four years?

RESPONSE

The picture painted in the Observer article was very bleak. In Southwark we are working with the community, stakeholders and officers to map out how the council's spending and role will change in line with our budget principles. This is genuine consultation and represents a different way of doing things in Southwark; it will inform the choices that we make in the budget and this level of cooperation will be the standard for this administration.

We are being forced to rethink the role of the council in the immediate future and for a generation to come and do not take this duty lightly. We have to look rigorously for alternatives before deciding to cut any service, whilst recognising as simply untrue the idea that making efficiency savings alone will cover the scale of the cuts. It is vital for our residents that we get this right and that is why we will not make any premature announcements about the future of individual services.

We are not making nor would we make these changes by choice. We recognise that the coming years are going to be difficult for our residents, partners and staff, but this strengthens our resolve to meet the challenge.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

How much has the Labour administration spent on Southwark Life since being elected in May?

RESPONSE

The council has spent £99,335 on Southwark Life since May, in line with the amount budgeted for by the previous administration. We will be reviewing the amount spent on council publicity as part of the budgeting process.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY SIMMONS

Can the leader please provide an update on the fairer future budget consultation?

RESPONSE

Before the election we promised that we would move from a closed and secretive budgeting process to one that is honest and open. It is deeply regretful that we are

making this positive step at exactly the same time as the council's budget is being slashed, but we believe that the budget situation also makes it more important than ever.

Since August we have visited every community council area twice. The Chief Executive and I have spoken to over 500 members of staff. We have received over 100 responses to our innovation challenge and have visited community groups from across the borough.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

Did the leader know about charges against Councillor Rhoden before the May elections and did he tell her not to worry?

RESPONSE

No and no.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CLAIRE HICKSON

How does the leader believe Southwark, particularly areas like Chaucer, will be affected by the proposed changes to housing benefits?

RESPONSE

The coalition government's cuts to housing benefit are made up of a combination of measures including cuts to the Local Housing Allowance; breaking the link with market rent increases by tying benefit increases to general consumer inflation, which is normally lower, leading to an increasing divergence between rents and housing benefit; the penalisation of those in long-term unemployment; the penalisation of under-occupiers and the penalisation of those with non-dependent co-habitants.

The changes will be painful in the short-term for those of our residents who lose out and it would be wrong of us to underestimate how difficult that will make their financial situation. But the changes are also likely to have a profound long-term impact upon our local community. That impact will mix personal upheaval as some residents are forced to leave homes and communities that they have lived in for many years, with a change to the make-up of those communities as sections are priced-out of the local market. Those parts of the borough that remain affordable for people on housing benefit could come under increasing pressure and demand as people move there from other, more expensive parts of the borough or even other parts of inner London. The result will likely be increasing polarisation and separation in our communities, and a move away from mixed communities.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Will the leader and his councillors in Southwark be campaigning for fairer votes next year?

RESPONSE

The way Labour members choose to vote in the national referendum on the voting system will not be whipped.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NEIL COYLE

Can the leader provide an update on the council's response to the proposed changes to the National Health Service?

RESPONSE

The cabinet passed a report at its November meeting which set out our approach to the changes that the coalition government are making to the NHS, including the decision to undertake a full due diligence exercise with the primary care trust (PCT) of all current joint and shared arrangements. Since then, in line with the cabinet recommendations, the council has actively supported an application by the Southwark GP consortium for pathfinder status.

The proposals that the coalition government made for changes to the health service earlier in the year were, in my opinion, unclear and incomplete and spread uncertainty throughout the health sector. A further Health White Paper is expected in early December and will hopefully bring clarity and stability for future health planning.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

Do you still agree with your quote about outsourcing in Southwark News on 21 October 2010 that 'We've had some pretty crappy failures'. Please can you identify which outsourced services you think are failures and which are not?

RESPONSE

It is right to acknowledge that there have been problems with some of our major contracts. Sometimes those problems have been inherent in the terms of the contracts themselves and there is a risk with all contracts that circumstances can change and that the terms of the contract are not able to move with them.

We campaigned in opposition for council tax collection to be brought back in-house due to the failure of the Liberata contract to continue to deliver improved council tax collection after initial success. We are now looking to see how we can work with Vangent to rework their contract to improve service for Southwark residents. Even the Veolia waste contract puts an effective glass ceiling on improvements to the borough's recycling rate.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES

Is the leader concerned that the proposals to increase tuition fees to up to £9,000 a year will affect the aspirations of children and young people in Southwark?

RESPONSE

Yes. The decision to introduce tuition fees was a difficult one to make, but was essential in order to allow for the number of places at universities across the country to be dramatically increased and make a university education a genuine possibility for young people across Southwark. The decision by this coalition government, however, to cut funding for university teaching by 79% and effectively triple the cost of university tuition for students is motivated by no such desire to expand educational opportunities and will only serve to limit them.

This is a retrograde step, and in the context of reduced budgets, we will continue to work to provide a range of targeted opportunities so that Southwark young people can access

higher education. For example, the council has already started to sponsor suitably qualified apprentices on part time degree courses.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Will the leader update the council on the progress in adopting shared services with Lambeth and Lewisham?

RESPONSE

Work between Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark on sharing services remains a high priority for Sir Steve Bullock, Steve Reed and me moving through the budget process. We will be meeting early in the new year to receive an update on shared services and I hope to be able to tell members at that time which services we are working towards sharing and what the process and timescales will be.

We are already jointly procuring a shared barristers framework with Lambeth and hope to save £150,000 a year.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ALTHEA SMITH

How many young people in Southwark are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance?

RESPONSE

3,729 young people in Southwark currently claim for the EMA.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

Who should decide the agendas of community councils?

RESPONSE

Community councils are free to determine their own agenda within the demands of council business and scope of the constitution.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN GOVIER

Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea have spoken about merging into a 'super council'. Is the leader of the council pursuing merging with any other council?

RESPONSE

No. We are pursuing shared services with Lambeth and Lewisham in order to make savings, but will not water down the political accountability within our borough for our services.

14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Following on from the cabinet's adoption of its seven agreed budget principles including the statement "we will do all that we can to protect our front-line services and support our most vulnerable residents" can he tell me as leader what additional commitments and

guarantees he is prepared to make to deliver on this principle and protect vulnerable service users who receive services from adult social care?

RESPONSE

If by 'commitments' the member means additional spending then his conception of the scale of the financial situation and mine differ. The coalition government's determination to cut local government finance so much and so rapidly means that we are being forced to cut all local budgets, including health and adult social care.

If by 'guarantees' he means to protect spending from cuts then I don't believe that making premature announcements about the future of individual services before we have finished the budget consultation or rigorous analysis of existing council spending is the best way forward.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

The leader has been meeting staff to discuss the challenge of the budget cuts. Can he provide a summary of what he has told them about potential staff cuts and redundancies?

RESPONSE

I have met almost 1,000 of our staff over the last few weeks in offices around the borough to listen to their concerns, discuss their ideas and to tell them about what we are doing as an administration. The overwhelming impression that I have received from those conversations is that they are clear about the challenge that lies ahead and concerned about the threat that the coalition's cuts pose to the community they serve. However, they are obviously also concerned about the potential of job losses. I have been clear with them that we are doing everything we can as an administration to avoid compulsory redundancies and are exploring all avenues of enquiry, but that some job losses are inevitable given the scale of the financial challenge.

16. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

Will the leader please list the cabinet members who work part time?

RESPONSE

The following members do not take their full SRA for working part-time elsewhere:

- John Friary
- Ian Wingfield

17. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NICK DOLEZAL

What does the leader believe has been achieved in the administration's first six months?

RESPONSE

We have already delivered on the following manifesto pledges:

- Set up a commission to work with the community to reduce teen pregnancy
- Cut councillors' special responsibility allowances by the same amount the pot was increased by the last administration

- Delivered the most open budget-making process to date
- Made every fire risk assessment of a council block available for local residents to access
- Hired a new Director of Housing to head our dedicated housing department
- Secured a minimum level of affordable housing at Elephant and Castle and made progress on the leisure centre and shopping centre
- Increased CCTV coverage in areas where it's needed
- Reopened the air quality monitoring stations
- Saved Nursery Row Park and Brayards Green from being built on in line with our commitment to value green space
- Consulted with the community on our charter of rights for social care.

We have also made progress on other commitments by:

- Committing to pilot free school meals next year
- Piloting a single phone number for social care enquiries
- Piloting food waste recycling
- Making significant progress against the pledge to cut agency staff numbers and consultancy spend as detailed in the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources scrutiny interview
- Making significant progress on Southwark's first violent crime strategy.

18. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL SITU

Can the leader please detail the next stages of the budget consultation?

RESPONSE

We have now finished the second stage of the budget consultation. The third and final stage will begin in the new year and will involve feedback on the input that has been received so far and a clearer indication of the administration's budget proposals. This will be followed by the publication of the cabinet's budget proposals and first ever pre-scrutiny of those proposals by the overview and scrutiny committee on 31 January 2011.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Please could the cabinet member provide an update on any progress made in relation to the provision of a new leisure centre at the Elephant and Castle?

RESPONSE

As cabinet member for regeneration I am very pleased with the progress that has made in the last 6 months towards the provision of a new leisure centre at the Elephant and Castle.

The cabinet has agreed that the site of the existing leisure centre will be the location for the new facility. We have carried out a very successful consultation exercise. Over 1,316 responses were received – a 16% response rate compared to an anticipated rate of just 5%. As we expected what people really want is a new swimming pool. The next most popular facilities were a gym, exercise studio and sports hall.

Of course these are financially challenging times and therefore we need to make our assets work hard to ensure we deliver our priorities. Part of the site will therefore be sold

to raise funding for the new facility and the reduced site means that we must make a choice between the new swimming pool or a double size sports hall.

In the light of the consultation results the cabinet therefore agreed on the 23 November to progress with a scheme for a new 6 lane, 25m swimming pool, a learner pool, a 4 court sports hall, a gym, an exercise studio, a crèche and a café.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

Rotherhithe community council committed £80,000 of cleaner greener safer (CGS) funding last year to the clearance of the area known as the old Fish Farms between Seven Islands leisure centre and Southwark Park. The list of public realm projects for the area confirms there has been no progress in clearing this and converting it to a useable area tied into the park. Can she confirm that she has no other plans for the Fish Farms area that contradict the commitment by Rotherhithe community council?

RESPONSE

Yes, I can confirm that I have no other plans for the fish farm that contradict the commitment by Rotherhithe community council.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

Can the cabinet member please tell me how many building certificates are issued by Southwark every year and the average number of calendar days from the last visit of a building site to certificate's issue and the average for the slowest quartile to be issued?

RESPONSE

A completion certificate is issued to the property owner following a satisfactory final inspection by a building inspector. The certificate confirms compliance under the building regulations for the work applied for originally.

We rely on the owner/builder to inform us when work is complete and ready for final inspection. Completion certificates have to be issued if a full plans application is deposited. It is not a statutory requirement to issue a certificate following submission of a building notice, however it is our practice to do this as the customers prefer to receive a certificate. We are sometimes asked to issue completion certificates for work carried out many years previously but they can only be issued for work that has been carried out since November 1985. Prior to that, completion certificates were not provided for in the legislation.

We monitor the time between the final inspection and the issuing of a certificate and the target is to do this within 10 days but following a final completion inspection information is sometimes required to be submitted (e.g. an electrical test certificate) before a completion certificate can be issued. We rely on the builder/owner to provide this information and it can take some time for this information to be submitted. This is normally the reason why some certificates are issued many days, and in some cases years, after the final inspection.

Year	No. certificates issued	Average number of days from last visit	Average no days to issue certificate for slowest quartile	% certificates issued within 10 days(local target)
2005-2006	632	59	193	41
2006-2007	502	49	233	22
2007-2008	877	35	335	43
2008-2009	907	41	301	43
2009-2010	598	36	324	39
2010-2011	512	42	283	37

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL BUKOLA

Can the cabinet member assure me that Section 106 created assets such as new health centres are owned by Southwark Council and where appropriate leased to others?

RESPONSE

There is no requirement in central government guidelines or the local authority Section 106 Supplementary Policy Document (SPD) that states or implies that S106 funds must be linked to the physical ownership of any particular assets. For example the local authority have in the past given grants to various bodies for improving or expanding services where the underlying assets were not under the ownership or control of the Council.

For health services it must be demonstrated that the use of the funds is to mitigate the impact of a consented development in terms of increasing the capacity of health service provision in the local area to satisfy the tests for expenditure.

NHS Southwark currently own or have head leases for health centres in Southwark. Health Centres are not routinely owned by Southwark Council, though the council are occasionally the primary care trust (PCT) landlords such as at Aylesbury Health Centre.

NHS Southwark lease (or sub-lease) parts of health centres and similar properties to clinical service providers where this is not the PCT itself. From 1 April 2011 this will increase significantly as the provider arm of the PCT is due to transfer to Guys and St Thomas' Foundation NHS Trust (GSTT). GSTT will lease the parts of community health care sites they occupy from NHS Southwark for the period of their clinical contract. Ownership / head leases, and capital investment will remain with NHS Southwark.

NHS Southwark is responsible for capital investment and expansion decisions for primary care (GP) and the community estate, and for strategic planning of the development of the estate to meet changing service requirements and population growth. The use of S106 health funds by the PCT is to directly fund expansion in primary / community healthcare capacity in Southwark. For example, we are applying for £119,833 health S106 monies to purchase equipment and furniture for the new health centre in Bermondsey Spa. The PCT has just signed a 25 year head lease on this building to secure NHS primary care service for this area.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Has the council now notified those tenants whose water rates are paid through their rent to the council about Thames Water's consultation?

RESPONSE

It is, of course, the responsibility of Thames Water, not Southwark Council, to notify tenants of the consultation – and to bear the cost of doing so.

Following the councillor briefing given by Thames Water on 15 October 2010, council officers sent a list of addresses to Thames Water on 28 October 2010 to be included on an additional mail out. Thames Water have since confirmed that an additional 9,000 letters have been sent out to addresses across London, including the additional addresses provided by Southwark Council, informing residents of the project and inviting them to additional exhibitions that have been arranged.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN MORRISSEY

With cuts to the working neighbourhoods fund (WNF), future jobs fund (FJF) and other council funding, what is the council going to be able to do in practice next year for Southwark residents who are looking for employment?

RESPONSE

The council has just adopted a new economic strategy that brings together local partners and providers.

2010/11 pledges include:

- More than a thousand people back to work through employment services (Southwark Council)
- More than a hundred young people into work (Southwark Council)
- Careers advisor for Rotherhithe schools (Southwark Families and Children's Trust)
- 165 jobs in Livesey (Jobcentre Plus)
- 143 into 12 month sustainable employment (Childcare Affordability Programme)
- 60 part-time work placements for young people (Foot in the Door)
- 22 council apprenticeships (Council Apprenticeship Programme)
- Jobs fairs held with developers and contractors (Better Bankside)
- Regeneration partners to secure employment, training and skills and apprenticeship opportunities for Southwark residents (including Canada Water, Tate, Neo Bankside)
- Developing additional provision for ESOL and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to support their progress along a vocational pathway (Southwark College).

The council's funding for directly commissioned employment and enterprise support will be greatly reduced from 2011/12 due to the loss of WNF, but the council is currently reviewing how best to maximise the value of remaining funding and the impact of its core support programme, Southwark Works. We are also working with the voluntary and community sector (V&CS) and other partners to identify priorities and review options for locally commissioned service delivery.

The government's principal response to reducing unemployment is the introduction of welfare to work schemes through the Single Work Programme (SWP), aligned to forthcoming welfare reforms and incentivisation of work. Implementation of the programme so far shows an expectation by government that resources from this programme are not primarily intended for use by local authorities and their local specialist employment support providers, but gaps in this mainstream provision will

remain (such as for workless people with health/disability conditions claiming invalidity benefit, and lone parents); the council will therefore want to ensure that it maintains its commitment and support to those most in need of support to enter the labour market and who are not adequately supported by mainstream, national programmes.

We are exploring how the impact of core local funding can be maximised as start-up finance to support Southwark Works and other employment support providers in the borough to enable them to become SWP suppliers and therefore also access SWP funding. We will also consider what pre-employment support and/or training may still be needed, particularly where support through the SWP is either inappropriate or simply not available to some of our residents who want to find work.

We wish to ensure that existing good, local services are not lost in the new system of provision, which will operate under three providers competitively covering the eastern half of London and operating under contracts that operate at a regional scale and have to manage the risk of a payment by results regime.

Meanwhile the council will be doing everything it can to help the V&CS and other small providers to access the programme as suppliers to the new prime contractors. We will be offering brokerage support between the prime contractors and our local providers once we know (early next month) which of the current long list of providers are shortlisted on the SWP framework.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR DAN GARFIELD

Can the cabinet member provide an insight into what will replace the London Development Agency (LDA)?

RESPONSE

The Mayor of London currently proposes that the LDA will be abolished by 2012. As the LDA was established by statute, this will require use of the Localism & Decentralisation Bill, due for publication this month. This will enable the Mayor to complete plans to “fold” residual LDA functions and budgets into the GLA group, and the bill is expected to lead to additional devolution of powers and responsibilities from the government to the Mayor.

The implications of this move remain unclear at this stage. Nationally, Regional Development Agency (RDA) functions have largely been earmarked for transfer to newly emerging Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Guidance for London has been different. Early signals from government invited bids for London LEPs, and at this stage a number of local organisations explored how they could play a part in putting forward proposals; including the Southwark Business Improvement Districts, Southwark Chamber of Commerce, the Cross River Partnership and Central London Forward. Guidance was delayed, submission deadlines were extended and negotiations continued between the Mayor of London, London Councils and central government. The Mayor of London favours one LEP for London, and currently the position in London appears likely to result in one London-wide LEP; the GLA group is currently preparing a bid for this purpose, due for submission on 3 December 2010.

While the contents of this bid cannot be verified at this point, the following indications have been given by the GLA group:

- There will be one LEP for London, not for sub-regions nor only for Thames Gateway.

- No funding is yet associated with the LEP, though negotiations still have to be completed on GLA/LDA future resources.
- The LEP will be expected to work within the statutory London-wide strategies, including the Mayor's economic development, transport and housing strategies.

The GLA have indicated that they will provide administrative support for the London LEP which would meet three to four times a year, with a membership to be determined but probably chaired by the Mayor with representation from businesses and boroughs. The LEP would not be a delivery body but provide a more strategic vision for business development to help ensure that London maximises its position as the country's economic driver.

The context for the LEP is not straightforward. There are a number of related changes such as the proposed LDA/HCA (Homes and Communities Agency) regeneration organisation to be set up within the GLA (depending on the abolition of the freestanding LDA and the devolution of the HCA London functions to the Mayor), and the setting up of the new Promote London body (to include inward investment and business support) which are not yet settled. Similarly the detailed operation of skills programmes and the precise role of the London Skills and Employment Board need to be confirmed.

Additional Information

It is possible that the outcome here could include some funding for the London LEP. It may well bid for Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and other funding streams as they arise or are devolved. Access to the RGF is not exclusive to LEPs and so there could be a number of bodies in London who are promoting innovation and business growth bidding for RGF and other Department of Business, Innovation and Skills funding.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON

What would the implications be of social rents moving to 80% of market rates on Southwark's regeneration schemes?

RESPONSE

The announcement in the Comprehensive Spending Review of new flexibilities in social rents was followed up by with the publication of 'Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing' a consultation document released by Communities and Local Government on 22 November. The proposals are being framed in the context of localism.

The government has proposed that new fixed term tenancies as short as two years at 'affordable rents' could be offered by housing associations to new tenants of social housing from April 2011, initially on a proportion of re-lets and in new stock in 'due course'. The affordable rent will be at a maximum of 80% of market rent but the consultation paper does not provide a definition on how market rents would be determined. The consultation is on whether to introduce legislation to enable local authorities to do the same.

Also, the document states that the proposal is for new lettings; there is recognition in the paper that tenants would be unlikely to move on less favourable terms, and therefore landlords should be required to offer existing secure or assured tenants who move to another social rented property a further lifelong tenancy.

The proposals will create significant difficulties in delivering regeneration schemes. The 80% market rent regime is proposed to generate development finance to make up for the 50% reductions in the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding for new homes. However, tenants being rehoused would expect to be moving on comparable rent levels, not rents two or three times their current rent levels. An 80% of market level rent on a new home is neither affordable nor acceptable for tenants moving as part of regeneration schemes like the Aylesbury or Elmington.

Thus allowing housing associations to charge 80% of market rent is not an option for new "affordable homes" in regeneration areas and will not provide the support needed to regeneration scheme viability to make up for the savage 50% cuts to HCA funding.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

What steps is the council taking to secure the preservation of the architectural and heritage features of the remaining buildings on the Dulwich Hospital site?

RESPONSE

The main hospital building and its associated ward blocks are not listed but are currently included on the council's draft local list and as such, the main hospital building is considered to be a heritage asset. The draft local list has no weight in planning terms until we have received the Inspector's report on the council's core strategy and we have been able to consult on the proposal to adopt the list and the criteria for selection of properties suitable for local listing.

Further, a planning brief was prepared by the council in July 2005. This notes that the "Southwark primary care trust does not consider that the existing buildings are suitable to deliver modern health care services". It goes on to state that any "proposals for the redevelopment of the site should ensure, where feasible, the sensitive adaptation of existing buildings and new buildings should be of a design that respects the character of the surrounding area and any structures retained on site." Further, that "sustainable design and construction methods should be incorporated into any new development or redevelopment of existing buildings." As such, the presumption in the planning brief is that the existing hospital buildings make a positive contribution and could be preserved and adapted and not demolished.

The planning brief was recently incorporated into the Dulwich Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which notes that the site includes a number of buildings of varying age, design and quality but makes no comment as to their proposed re-use.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

Will the cabinet member provide the percentage of eligible primary school children who took up their entitled free school meal for 2009/10?

RESPONSE

Based on the information schools provided for the schools' food trust survey on the number of free meals served and the percentage of pupils who are eligible and have applied for a free school meal, 87.5% of eligible Southwark primary school children took up their free school meal in 2009/10.

29. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

What evidence does the cabinet member have to demonstrate that free school meals tackles obesity?

RESPONSE

The National Child Measurement Programme measures children at reception age and at year 6. According to the latest available data for the 2008/09 academic year, Southwark had the following levels of childhood obesity:

- 1) 26.7% obesity among year 6 pupils, ranking us top nationally.
- 2) 14.2% obesity among reception pupils, making us third highest nationally.

When this administration came in, using the latest data for 2008/09, an average of 36% of reception children and 50% of year 6 children were obese.

The relevant point for this question about our free healthy school meals is that they are not just free but they are also healthy; because research shows that children eating healthy meals are less likely to be obese. The School Food Trust also noted in a 2009 report that: "Findings from initiatives involving the provision of universal free school meals suggest that having a healthy meal at lunchtime may offer benefits linked to behaviour and other learning outcomes, and may impact on children's eating habits away from school."

Southwark Public Health reviewed the literature and research relating to the impact of free school meals and obesity, finding positive impact when they are implemented as part of a whole-school approach. This whole-school approach underpins our delivery of free healthy school meals.

30. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK

Please could the cabinet member define what a 'healthy' free school meal will be and what measures she will introduce to ensure that each meal reaches this standard?

RESPONSE

Southwark school meals meet the statutory 14 national nutrient-based standards and 11 food-based standards. These ensure that school meals include a variety of foods containing all the nutrients a growing child needs. Healthy school meals should help children to achieve a balanced diet by including plenty of fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, some protein rich foods, some milk and dairy foods and only small amounts of foods high in fat, salt and sugar. Training has been provided for school meals providers and catering staff on the nutrient and food based standards.

It is the duty of schools' governing bodies to ensure that meals in their school meet these statutory standards, a function generally discharged through the contract agreed with the caterer. The effectiveness of the monitoring processes will be looked at through the evaluation of the free, healthy school meals pilot.

The council continues to provide support to schools in promoting healthy eating, for example through the Healthy Schools programme. All our schools are on track to

achieve that status, for which they have to at least meet the government's nutrient and food-based standards.

As part of the free healthy school meals programme, the council is developing and implementing a framework to support schools and governing bodies to quality assure their meal provision, as well as an evaluation framework which will include a nutritional assessment of school menus and a sampling of meals. With the primary care trust, we will also ensure that school meals meet the standards by ensuring that each food/drink used in school lunch recipes is supported by a full nutrient specification.

31. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

Will the cabinet member outline how much the universal free school meal programme will cost per annum? Please could she provide a breakdown by revenue and capital costs?

RESPONSE

Work is being carried out to fully cost this commitment. The most important component of that work is piloting free healthy school meals in ten primary schools, with a variety of characteristics, this academic year. The pilot will run from January to July 2011 with reception and year 1 pupils. The pilot will help determine precise revenue and capital costs.

The intention is to begin rolling out the programme next academic year. The programme will be offered to all schools to start in September 2011 – initially to specific year groups and thereafter to all year groups in all Southwark primary schools.

32. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

In light of the horrific child abuse case in the Plymouth private nursery, is the cabinet member satisfied with the inspection process and management of all nurseries in Southwark?

RESPONSE

The Plymouth case was indeed horrific. In Southwark our approach to nursery inspections and management is robust. All providers must meet the welfare requirements as set out in our guidance on conditions for inclusion in the directory of early years providers. We have an explicit condition related to safeguarding which includes the undertaking of an annual safeguarding audit (this latter helps us produce the section 11 statement to the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board). All settings are offered support in meeting the standards as set out.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families rated our work on safeguarding in the early years as best practice when they did a visit early in 2010. In addition, Southwark is pioneering in that for the past two years we have carried out annual safeguarding audits of all settings. This is not a requirement either of Ofsted inspections or the Early Years Foundation Stage but we have seen this as important and the Plymouth Serious Case Review is recommending that this should happen in all authorities.

33. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

In these tough economical times caused by the previous government, what is the cabinet member doing to protect the youth service?

RESPONSE

I remind the questioner that the tough economical times were not caused by the previous government but were caused by the worst global recession in over 60 years which started due to the over-heating of the sub-prime mortgage market in the USA.

I also remind the questioner that the actions of the previous government meant that the effects of that recession in the UK and in boroughs like Southwark were substantially mitigated – with, for example, much lower unemployment across the country than in previous recessions.

As a council we are facing severe cuts to our budget due to the unnecessary depth, speed and unfairness of the government's cuts.

We are currently in the process of a large-scale public consultation on how to implement the cuts across all our services – to ensure the decisions that we make are as fair, transparent and good value for money as possible.

Along with a range of other services we have to look at what the youth service delivers for young people across the borough and how much we spend on it. We need to be flexible in our approach with regard to delivering youth work and ensure we work closely alongside the voluntary sector so that we provide a robust and comprehensive offer which all young people can access.

34. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

What new actions does she propose the teenage pregnancy commission will take to further reduce the number of teenage conceptions in Southwark?

RESPONSE

The Teenage Pregnancy Commission was launched last month. It is made up of representatives from across Southwark's communities, led by an independent chair, and will produce a series of recommendations in a report in the spring. It would be inappropriate for me to pre-empt or second-guess the course of their investigations or their recommendations.

35. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

How have the coalition government's cuts – including those announced in the spending review – affected funding coming from central government to children's services?

RESPONSE

As a council we are facing severe cuts to our budget due to the unnecessary depth, speed and unfairness of the government's cuts. As part of this, children's services is facing cuts.

In 2010/11 children's services has already suffered cuts of £2.7m revenue and £3.5m capital in-year.

For future years, the full detail of the spending review cuts by central government that affect children's services is not yet known.

36. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR VIKKI MILLS

What progress has been made to bring in free healthy school meals?

RESPONSE

Free healthy school meals will be piloted in 10 schools this academic year. The pilot will run from January to July 2011 with reception and year 1 pupils. The intention is to begin rolling out the programme next academic year. The programme will be offered to all schools to start in September 2011, and initially to specific year groups. Thereafter the programme will be rolled out to all year groups in all Southwark primary schools.

37. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR SUNIL CHOPRA

What progress has been made on the teenage pregnancy commission?

RESPONSE

The Teenage Pregnancy Commission was launched last month, and has already had its first full session. It has an independent chair and is made up of representatives from across Southwark's communities. It will report, with recommendations, in the spring.

38. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK-HILTON

Will the cabinet member outline how he is implementing scrutiny's recommendations about new and replacement trees in the recent tree strategy?

RESPONSE

Being appointed Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Recycling earlier this year, subsequent to my being Chair of the Environment and Community Support Scrutiny Sub-Committee at the time of the Tree Strategy Review, has afforded me a great opportunity to follow up on the sub-committee's recommendations with a good number of practical measures. The principal actions I have initiated which arose from the Southwark Tree Review were provided at Appendix 1 of the recent Tree Management Strategy individual decision making (IDM) report. This included the following scrutiny recommendation:

Recommendation 9: That a dedicated tree (planting) budget is identified.

The Tree Section's budget has been restructured, including the separation of works budgets from overheads (salaries and section running costs). The Tree Section prioritises spend in accordance with available budgets including the budget provided by the Housing Revenue Account. Details on work prioritisation are included within the Tree Management Strategy.

The extent to which a tree planting budget can be established is constrained by existing budgets and priorities. However the council is committed to a replacement planting programme to maintain existing stock wherever possible.

New planting distinct from replacement planting is not covered by existing revenue budgets. The council will consider carefully where, using the principle of 'right place, right tree' and when to plant new trees in order to manage the financial implications appropriately. Guidance for planting new trees, including the criteria for selecting the right location, is contained in the Tree Management Strategy.

Where capital funding is made available for new planting schemes, the schemes will be assessed using the Tree Management Strategy and a minimum 3 year maintenance and defects liability period is required. Existing capital schemes include the Mayor's priority tree programme and the Cleaner Greener Safer programme.

In addition to the above, all tree planting (both new and replacement) now require a minimum 3 year maintenance and defects liability period. The 3 year maintenance costs are now included within the cost of planting to ensure these trees have the best chance of establishing.

The council is also proposing to introduce a 'tree sponsorship' scheme for tree planting. These schemes would be for replacement planting.

39. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MITCHELL

Would the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling confirm that he is aware of the resolution concerning Red Post Hill of the Dulwich community council on 10 November 2010 which calls for changes to the "self-enforcing measures" currently in place there in respect of the North Dulwich 20 mph zone, and would he outline future steps and timescales to put the requested changes into effect?

RESPONSE

I am aware of and have authorised officers to proceed with the necessary steps to implement the resolution of the Dulwich Community Council, subject to (a) the necessary funding being available, (b) the outcome of re-consultation with residents, businesses and any statutory consultees and (c) TfL's consent to changes to the original agreed and implemented scheme. To complete the scheme in its entirety is likely to take a minimum of 5 months.

40. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Will the cabinet member list which properties in Southwark are not warm, dry and safe?

RESPONSE

The stock condition survey found from a sample of 10% of the borough that approximately 35% of the council's housing stock was left by the previous administration falling short of the decent homes standard. This represents an indication of those homes which were left not warm, dry or safe. In making the borough's homes warm, dry and safe each estate will be assessed in turn as work on that estate begins. Our full approach to improving council homes for our tenants is currently under an extensive and

necessary review, due to short-sighted policies of the previous administration, and will be set out in a cabinet report early next year.

41. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

Will the cabinet member outline the current patrolling regime of the community warden service? Please could he outline how this may change as a result of the mess that the previous government left this country?

RESPONSE

The wardens service reorganisation commenced in October 2009, following a policy review of the service. As a result, the current wardens service patrolling comprises the following:

- Wardens cover five town centre areas – Bermondsey, Elephant & Castle, Camberwell, Peckham and Central Dulwich. In addition we have a Parks Services with a dedicated warden based in each of the four major parks. The Parks Liaison Officers can also draw on colleagues from the wider service.
- We also have a borough-wide response team of 12 wardens, to cover crime hotspots and emergency incidents. The latter includes critical incidents such as fires, floods, power outages, and serious crime issues.
- We have one wardens team which is funded by Better Bankside and covers the business area between Blackfriars Bridge and London Bridge.
- Patrol timings in each area are 0930-2230 Monday to Friday and 1200-2000 Saturday and Sunday (0930-1730 in the winter) albeit the service is extremely flexible and times can be adjusted as required, for specific operations or in response to emergency incidents. From next month the response team will be covering occasional Friday and Saturday nights until the early hours as part of a wider police-council initiative to police the night time economy.

Regarding your last comment, it is the coalition government's unparalleled cuts in public services spending, depriving Southwark of more than £80m that will lead to severe cuts in community safety spending within this authority and the Metropolitan Police. This will rather seriously put at risk all of the positive work that we have developed over the last decade and perhaps Councillor Nelson and her Liberal Democrat colleagues could better spend their time defending local residents from brutal cuts.

42. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Please can the cabinet member provide the number of vacant posts that exist within the council at present?

RESPONSE

The council's official establishment shows 1002 vacant posts. These posts are not all full time vacancies and many posts are now being held for deletion to achieve savings.

43. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

How many members of staff have retired in the last five years? Please can you provide a breakdown by year?

RESPONSE

Over five years 433 people have retired.

2009/10	110
2008/09	82
2007/08	103
2006/07	74
2005/06	64

44. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

What steps will be taken with GP practices in the borough that are continuing to score negatively on quality of achievement and access following the publication of the disappointing GP performance indicators scorecard?

RESPONSE

Improving access to patients

I have raised this issue with the primary care trust (PCT). They encourage all practices to engage with their own patients to discuss ways that they can improve access to patients by encouraging patients to provide feedback on services they receive.

In addition the PCT monitors access through the national patient survey but is aware that the survey is based on a relatively small number of patients when broken down to practice level.

Contractual sanctions

The PCT has and will make use of the contractual levers it has at its disposal. As part of the recent performance framework policy they have been concentrating on the bottom five practices on the balanced scorecard and they are all subject to the development of an action plan to improve services.

All five practices have implemented their action plans and are at various stages of completion. As part of the action plan there has been key performance targets attached to the action plan to demonstrate improvement.

Since the balanced scorecard has been refreshed with the latest available data this has had the impact of moving practices up or down on the scorecard.

The PCT are now working with eight practices. They will continue to work with the practices until they have completed the action plan and achieved the desired outcomes and improved the provision of services to patients. Alternatively, if the practice fails in some or all of the requirements, contractual sanctions are applied.

Overall, the scorecard has been a success – it lets patients see how practices are doing.