

Lead member Questions – Scrutiny sub-committee November 2010

Regeneration and Leisure sub-committee

1. What is the likely impact of the Coalition Government's cuts going to be on your department? (Mark Glover)

Government has cut funding to the arts and culture by 29.6% over four years. The Arts Council has said that it will pass 16.9% of this on to funded organisations and projects, commencing with a blanket 6.9% reduction next year. The year after that will see new funding criteria with some organisations at risk of losing out completely. This will impact on many arts organisations in Southwark, including those that are funded through the Arts Council. A strategic approach to funding arrangements within the Council and other partners should retain some service and hubs of activity in most areas of the borough.

The Culture service itself will face challenges in terms of delivering an arts, heritage and events programme at the current level but the current strategy aims to retain a whole borough view and to work with the Cultural Quarter to deliver services across the borough. We will also consider working in collaboration with neighbouring boroughs. However, this central government imposed cut may mean that some areas of service may have to cease operating.

The cuts have already had a tangible effect in the cessation of free swimming for children and older people. The end of Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) monies will impact on the delivery of the community sports programme and the Southwark Community Games. Sport England has received a reduction of almost 30% in its funding and capital grants from this and from governing bodies, to improve sport and health infrastructure are also currently in question. This is in advance of the spending review and is only likely to get more severe.

There is also a potential risk to services for adult learners. The Treasury is asking for reductions of up to 40% in public funding for education and training for people aged 19 and over. The emphasis will remain on acquiring and improving skills for employability. This is linked to an increasing need for provision of more qualification based courses. As a result of this, courses for leisure and pleasure will require much larger fee contributions from learners. In some "high-cost" courses which may recruit relatively low numbers this may mean learners will have to pay the full fees to recover the cost of running the course. There appears to be some continuing commitment to maintain the Adult Safeguard budget to support informal adult learning. This includes personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL), Family Learning, Literacy and Numeracy (FLLN), Wider Family Learning (WFL) and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Areas (NLDA). How this will translate into funding for Southwark is not yet clear, and is unlikely to be until closer to the end of our current contract with the Skills Funding Agency, which runs until 31st July 2011.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) has been identified for closure by Government. Although not a direct funder of services, it has acted as a conduit for other funding streams and as an advocate for museums, libraries and archives with potential funders. This has included negotiating advantageous rates for subscriptions from local authorities for online information sources. The scale of provision of the library service in Southwark will need to be considered given the overall impact of Government cuts.

2. Will the possible expansion of Newington Reference Library be affected by the possible sale of Walworth Town Hall (Colomba Blango)

There is no funded project to extend the Newington Reference Library; therefore the sale of Walworth Town Hall will have no impact. The Newington Library and Walworth Town Hall are two totally separate buildings albeit next door to each other.

3. Can she update us on the Southwark Park Athletics track proposal and its future? (Paul Noblet)

Southwark park running track continues to be a priority for this administration, but at the moment we have to recognise that we do not have the funding available. We will continue to talk to local residents about their vision for the running track and at the same time investigate all possible funding opportunities for making that vision a reality.

4. Is the refurbishment of Seven Islands Leisure Centre a priority for the administration, and if so what is the timetable for plans to be drawn up and works to begin? (Paul Noblet)

Finding a practical, affordable solution for Seven Islands is a priority. A capital bid for seven million pounds has been submitted and will be considered as part of the budget process. A timetable will be published once a funding decision is made.

5. Can she update us on plans for the library building on Albion Street once it has been vacated in 2011 (Paul Noblet)

Once the Canada Water Library is ready for occupation, the current Rotherhithe Library will be declared surplus to the service requirements of the library service and passed to the stewardship of the Council's property team. Members will be aware that a report to the former Executive Committee in December 2006 secured tacit approval for the disposal of the building, with the resulting capital receipt being considered for contribution to the overall costs of the new library.

6. What is your opinion of the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre consultation evening held on 14th September? (Cathy Bowman)

The consultation evening on the 14th September was a great success with over one hundred people attending but it is only part of the consultation being undertaken. Some of the key elements of the programme are as follows:

- On 23rd August 8th, 8190 letters were sent to residents (7,324) and Fusion customers (866). This was followed up by an e-mail to the Elephant and Castle leisure Centre stakeholder list which included all local politicians, stakeholders internal to the Council; sports groups and schools. Letters were also sent to 208 ex-residents of the Heygate who had opted to return to the area in the future.
- 28th September – South Bank University and London College of Communications, display in the libraries with opportunities to feed back

- 30th September – South Bank Forum- meeting for businesses, sports organisations and other stakeholders
- 5th October – Borough and Bankside Community Council meeting, display and questions
- 6th October – Walworth Community Council meeting, display and questions
- The consultation closed On October 8th and analysis is well underway
- Sport England have visited for an on-site consultation as has Proactive Southwark and advocates for disabled customers.

7. When is she planning to re-open the Watersports Centre Dockside Path following the recent refurbishment of the centre? (Paul Noblet)

There is no “dockside path” which has been closed. The question refers to a “cut-through” via the Watersports centre’s car park and past the launching slipway which had been used on an informal basis by some members of the public including cyclists and (even on occasion) people on mopeds and motorbikes.

The management of the centre and users had expressed concern for sometime that use by the public of this cut-through could be potentially hazardous both to the members of the public and to users of the centre due to the risk of collision either in the car park or on the path to the front-door of the centre or by the slipway.

The cut-through was closed when the site was closed for refurbishment (as it was then part of a building site). An assurance was given by the previous Lead Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure that an independent risk-assessment would be undertaken when the centre was back in operation to see what the situation was then. The rationale for this was that concerns had already been expressed about the safety of the cut-through prior to the refurbishment when the numbers of users were relatively few. The object of the refurbishment was to increase the number of users substantially which would also change the nature of the risk. This has proved to be the case. In the six months prior to re-development of the centre there were 22,000 visits. In the six month following the refurbishment the number has gone up to almost 56,000 visits.

The independent risk assessment has now been undertaken and the recommendation is that the cut-through should remain closed in order to ensure the safety of users and the general public. Officers from the Council’s Legal section have also provided further advice following the risk assessment. Their advice in sum is:

1. From their investigations there is no evidence of public or private right of way through the Centre’s property.
2. The findings of the risk assessment cannot be ignored. Doing so could well expose the Council to litigation, should an injury occur, and it could also invalidate the Council’s public liability insurance and also expose Fusion (the centre’s operator) to a similar risk.

Furthermore, there is a safer alternative route open to members of the public wishing to access Rope Street from Greenland Quay which is of no greater length or inconvenience to them.

8. Can she update us on the progress of the Canada Water Library?

The building works are progressing well and the library is expected to open in September 2011. A topping out ceremony for the building took place on November 3rd. Work has also commenced on purchasing stock for the library in order to ensure that a wide choice of books and other materials will be available when the building opens.

The search for a café provider has also commenced and is being handled by the Council's property team.

Discussions are being progressed with potential learning programme providers for the library and a range of organisations have expressed an early interest.

It is expected that the library will act as an anchor scheme for the regeneration of the area, offering a range of learning, cultural and social activities, linking well to transport to enable residents from other parts of the borough to visit, and that the café, learning facilities and exhibition and performance space will bring new users to the library. There will be a strong focus on provision for young people and families but the programme of activity will reflect, and be available to people of all ages and from all communities.

9. How will she use sports and activity in schools to help tackle childhood obesity? (Columba Blango)

The Sports Development Team and the Southwark Community Games provide extra curricular support to the schools in addition to the work undertaken by the school sports co-ordinators.

Under the auspices of the Southwark Community Games, fifty-six schools in Southwark receive an additional hour of sport per week in rugby, athletics and cricket over thirty weeks of the year. The programme is provided to the schools entirely free of charge. In 2009/2010 almost 8,400 individual children were involved in this programme

A random survey of 822 participants was undertaken as part of an MSc Dissertation by a Public Health student at Staffordshire University. Boys and girls from all the Community Council areas, both from school and street sessions and from both age range groups (8 to 11 and 12 to 16 years) completed questionnaires. Some of the findings included:

148 individuals from the sample had joined local sports clubs as a result of their involvement with SCG.

21 participants had become county or higher, level athletes.

75.1% reported that they had made new friends.

86.85% enjoyed competing against other children

59.9% said that they now eat a healthier diet.

61.4% reported that they were doing better at school.

226 (i.e. over 25%) of respondents took part in both school and street sessions.

The Superstar Challenge is a pilot programme which has been run with smaller groups of year five children (age 9 -10) who have been identified as overweight or obese, at small number of schools where there was a notable problem in this area.

Over the ten week programme children lost (on average between 2.6 and 2.9 cm from their waist circumference). This is rated as both positive and significant by health workers involved in the programme

Overweight and obesity occur when more energy is consumed through food and drink than expended through physical activity. At this level, regular physical activity together with a healthy balanced diet are effective mechanisms for controlling weight at an individual level. Southwark Children's Services has been investing in improving the life chances of Southwark pupils by supporting them to eat a balanced diet and enjoy physical activity on a regular basis through advice, guidance and support to schools on policy guidance and curriculum. This support has been provided to schools through the Healthy Schools team, complemented by support to deliver physical activity provide by the School Sports Partnership. Officers have been working with colleagues in schools to embed developments to secure good practice when funding ceases at the end of this financial year.

10. Will she guarantee the future of the community games? (Columba Blango)

The Southwark Community Games is part funded by Working Neighbourhood Fund which comes to an end in 2010/11. With the prospect of severe savings targets, following the Government's spending review, it is not possible for the Council to guarantee the future of any service. However, officers are investigating possible funding sources.

11. Given the likely reduction in the Council's budget forced by the state of the national finances, where do you intend to make cuts in your department if directed to by the Leader of the Council? (Columba Blango)

Officers are preparing options for savings of up to 25% of the current budget. These will be taken into consideration as part of the budget setting process together with proposals for this level of saving from across the Council. No decisions have been made at this stage.

12. Can she outline her views on the benefits to the community of the Event in Southwark Park and the Bermondsey Carnival? (Columba Blango)

The Event in Southwark Park became the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Carnival in July 2010. Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Carnival is a community celebration, bringing together and showcasing many aspects of life in this area. This includes showing off and making use of the Victorian bandstand and beautifully refurbished park, local organisations promoting their services, arts organisations presenting their work and local schools participating in the parade with families and children enjoying a good day out.

The festival also tells the story of the area, feeding work with local historians and heritage organisations into all the activities across the event. The partnership work, the showcasing, the heritage education and schools arts programmes develop a sense of pride by creating a day that introduces them to new experiences and opportunities. The July 2010 festival was particularly successful in attracting families and children. The Blitz theme connected with a significant anniversary that is relevant

for the older generation in the area. This is one of the borough's free festivals and brings local people and visitors to the area together in a celebratory event.

**13. How will she guarantee a swimming pool at the Elephant and Castle?
(Cathy Bowman)**

On the 23rd November the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations in the report titled "Elephant and Castle – Provision of a new Leisure Centre". The report clearly sets out the facility will include the following core provision: a 6 lane 25m swimming pool, a learner pool, a 4 court sports hall, a gym, an exercise studio, a crèche and a cafe.

14. What Olympic events is she planning for the coming year to get young people interested in sport? (Cathy Bowman)

- Southwark's Community Sport and Physical Activity Team hosted the 2010 Olympic Open Weekend at Surrey Quays Shopping Centre back in July, the date has been set for next year's Open Weekend and will run over the weekend of 22nd - 24th July 2011.
- Southwark Community Games run events for schools and on housing estates in both Football and Athletics, both of which are Olympic sports. A three month programme of schools athletics coaching starts in the Winter School term from January to March 2011 with a participation rate of around 1,500 young people.
- Through the Sport Unlimited programme run in partnership with Southwark Council, Boxing, BMX and Table Tennis sessions are available for young people who are not usually engaged by team sports.
- National School Sport Week which will run from 27th June 2011 has a myriad of Olympic sports for young people to sample, try and compete in, the 2010 NSSW was attended by over 3,000 Southwark Young People and was coached by 30+ Southwark Council's Community Sports Coaches.
- SCG are currently delivering a three month programme of Tag Rugby in 55 schools which climaxes with a fortnight of competitions. Rugby will make its debut as an Olympic sport in the 2016 Olympics.
- The Council was the second signatory to 'Inclusive and Active' the London Mayor's plan for inclusion of disabled people in sport we are also signatories to the recently launched 'Inclusive and Active 2'. Under this scheme a full programme of sport is provided for people with disabilities including children and young people. According to the Inclusive and active survey the programme has been a success increasing the percentage of people with disabilities who are regularly active from 3.5% to 10.4% (the London average is 8.9%). Children with a range of disabilities participated for Southwark in the London Youth Games this year (and will continue to do so). A number of them gained individual medals (four gold, one silver and four bronze).

- Last but not least the main link to the Paralympics will be the programme called '**Playground to Podium**', which is a dedicated initiative designed to identify and nurture disabled young people with the potential to be elite athletes. It focuses on six sports, Athletics, Boccia, Football, Swimming, Table tennis and Wheelchair basketball. As part of this programme County Athlete Assessment days are run. This year it was at Crystal Palace stadium, where representatives/athletes from Southwark attended. The group of athletes attending these assessment days are organised mainly through the School Sports Partnerships, with support from schools and the Council

15. What are her plans for the former Livesey Museum? (Cathy Bowman)

The former Livesey Museum building is protected through the objects of the Trust for use as a library or similar use benefiting residents in the old parish of Camberwell, now Camberwell, Peckham and parts of Dulwich, Rotherhithe and Walworth areas. These objects are overseen by the Charity Commission.

An exercise was undertaken to find a suitable use for the building following its closure as part of a budget savings exercise in 2007. Theatre Peckham submitted proposals in line with the objects of the Trust and these were approved by the Executive. Unfortunately, Theatre Peckham have since withdrawn advising that they are unable to raise the requisite capital to fulfil their proposals and instead wish, for the moment, to concentrate on developing their organisational capacity.

Officers are in discussion with the Charity Commission and will be bringing a report on future options to Cabinet in December. There have been two approaches to the Council from voluntary sector organisations in regard to the building and these will be considered in line with the requirements of the object of the Trust.

16. What value does she place on the borough's historical and cultural institutions and what is her view of the importance of the borough having a vibrant cultural sector? (Cathy Bowman)

Southwark's historical and cultural institutions are integral to the borough's success, identity and future development. Southwark is one of London's most historic boroughs and has a rich artistic and creative track record, and this is to be celebrated in the borough and as part of London as a world city.

Our cultural institutions also work very closely with Southwark communities, schools, children and young people and the opportunities for experiencing, learning and creating are exceptional. The cultural sector is also important in terms of employment and economic impact.

Through a formal partnership with organisations in the South Bank and Bankside Cultural Quarter and with key institutions, I ensure that Southwark Council has close links with the major organisations and that the sector delivers for local people. This is particularly important in times of recession. Culture has been a key part of

regeneration in the borough, and I intend that this is the case in the on-going renewal of areas of the borough.

The cultural and creative industries are one of few growth areas of the economy and we need to ensure that young people in the borough are able to access opportunities for training and for future employment, and that our economic and enterprise strategies support creative businesses.

The vibrancy of the cultural sector is of course fuelled by new talent and cutting edge activities. I support the use of temporary and unused spaces in the borough for artists work, such as the Hannah Barry Gallery in Peckham. I also ensure that the borough is part of regional and national initiatives such Open House, London festival of architecture, Big Draw and Big Dance. I will also ensure that Southwark plays a key part in London 2012, and that the culture and history of our borough is promoted on a world stage through this opportunity.

17. Does she agree that having high quality play facilities, such as Tabard Astro Turf, is of vital importance to local children? (Cathy Bowman)

The provision of good quality sports and play facilities are important to children and young people all over the borough. Tabard Gardens had about £200k invested in improvements to the pitch in the recent past.

The Leisure and Wellbeing team are currently looking at funding opportunities for a number of other projects across the borough including the refurbishment of sixteen multi-use games areas (MUGAs), two per Community Council area. Two have been completed, one is underway and others are in process.

There are also plans for larger playing field developments. We are currently in discussion with the Football Association regarding a potential project at Homestall Road/ Peckham Rye, and gearing up to submit expressions of interest to the PlaySport Facilities Fund for other projects currently being identified.

18. Approximately 3 years ago there was a report compiled looking specifically at youth clubs and facilities. What has happened to this report? Were there any recommendations? What was the cost of this report? Did the Council receive value for money? (Helen Morrissey)

The report, 'Things to do, places to go, someone to talk to in Southwark - Activities for Children and Young People', was produced internally and therefore at no cost to the Local Authority.

The report is a live document and is still relevant as to how the Youth Offer is to develop over the next twelve months. We are looking at the issues around capital investment and considering which are our best possible options. A conditions survey of all youth service premises is taking place at the moment.

We have developed an Integrated Youth Support Service as recommended in the report and are in the process of firming up our commissioning arrangements for 2011/2012, another recommendation from the report.

As with all reports that have been in place for some time a variety of areas have already been implemented, such as the recommendations regarding the Connexions Service, but have since changed again due to changes in government funding. Over the next six to twelve months we will be re-visiting the report, looking at how it aligns with service delivery at present, and how it can continue to help shape service delivery in the future.

19. What is the proposed process for the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre? (Helen Morrissey)

The process for the delivery of a new Leisure Centre for Elephant and Castle is contained in the Cabinet Report of the 23rd of November but can be summarised as follows.

- Appointment of the LEP to deliver the project subject to value for money test
- Confirmation of funding being available by Cabinet as part of Capital Refresh
- Technical surveys and scheme design
- Sign off of a planning application prior to submission by the Cabinet Member
- Submission of planning consent/grant of planning
- Cabinet decision to formally award construction contract
- Decommissioning the existing centre and demolition
- Construction of the new leisure centre
- Commissioning and opening of the new centre

20. How will the Olympics benefit youth in Southwark?

The London 2010 Olympics and Paralympic Games provide an unprecedented opportunity for young people to get involved in sport, culture and volunteering, and in projects that promote understanding of the Olympic Values and engender a sustained interest in sport, physical activity and culture.

At least 50% of Southwark schools are involved in the Get Set programme which actively involves young people in sports and curriculum based activity relating to the themes and values. The Olympic Values are friendship, excellence and respect. The Paralympic Values are inspiration, determination, courage and equality.

Southwark's programme within the borough will include a programme of activities for young people to take part in the run-up to the Games and during the Games. This will include being part of London-wide cultural Olympiad projects such as Sounds 2012, as well as sporting activities. As spectators, young people will be able to experience key moments of the Games and ceremonies, such as the Torch Relay, and through the Live Sites. We also intend that young people be inspired by world class athletes and have opportunities to meet some of them within the borough.

Southwark's proposed volunteering programme will enable a number of young people to work as part of the visitor experience and 'welcoming the world' at this time. A number of young people will also be able to sign up directly to volunteer at the Olympic Park as part of LOCOG's 70,000 volunteers.

As far as possible, we will work to connect young people with the key moments in the Games and to the opportunities that are created at the Olympic Park after the Games.

