

<b>Item No.</b> 15.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 24 January 2011	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Motions Referred from Council Assembly	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the cabinet considers the motions set out in the appendices attached to the report.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Council assembly at its meeting on Tuesday, 29 November 2011 agreed a number of motions and these stand referred to the cabinet for consideration.
3. The cabinet is requested to consider the motions referred to it. Any proposals in a motion are treated as a recommendation only. The final decisions of the cabinet will be reported back to the next meeting of council assembly. When considering a motion, cabinet can decide to:
  - Note the motion; *or*
  - Agree the motion in its entirety, *or*
  - Amend the motion; *or*
  - Reject the motion.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.10(6), the attached motions were referred to the cabinet. The cabinet will report on the outcome of its deliberations upon the motions to a subsequent meeting of council assembly.
5. The constitution allocates responsibility for particular functions to council assembly, including approving the budget and policy framework, and to the cabinet for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of council services on a day-to-day basis.
6. Any key issues, such as policy, community impact or funding implications are included in the advice from the relevant chief officer.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Motions submitted in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.10 (6).	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Lesley John Constitutional Team 020 7525 7228

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Number	Title
Appendix 1	Motion on themed debate - Housing
Appendix 2	Retention of school crossing patrols in Dulwich
Appendix 3	Safer neighbourhood team sergeants
Appendix 4	Local government pension scheme

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager	
<b>Report Author</b>	Lesley John, Constitutional Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	16 January 2012	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Strategic Director of Housing Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		16 January 2012

**MOTION ON THEMED DEBATE - HOUSING**

At council assembly on Tuesday 29 November 2011 a motion on housing was moved by Councillor Paul Noblet and seconded by Councillor Michael Bukola. The motion was subsequently amended and the amended motion stands referred to the cabinet as a recommendation.

**Recommendation**

- (1) That council assembly believes Southwark faces immense challenges in relation to its housing stock over the next 30 years that can only be resolved by taking a long-term, strategic approach.
- (2) That council assembly notes that Southwark Council still owns 31% of Southwark's housing stock (down from 70% in 1981) – around 40,000 homes. Despite this reduction in local authority control, there are nearly 17,000 people on the council's waiting list.
- (3) That council assembly believes that decent housing – where communities are mixed – is key to securing a better future for our young people, developing stable and vibrant communities, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and improving public health.
- (4) That council assembly notes the immediate challenge faced on estates with high investment needs including Abbeyfield Estate, Four Squares Estate and Hawkstone low rise and calls for dialogue between council and tenants and leaseholders to continue.
- (5) That council assembly notes the uncertainty many tenants and leaseholders faced under the last housing investment programme, and welcomes the new £326 million, five year programme which will ensure every council home is warm, dry and safe by 2015/16.
- (6) That council assembly also welcomes the review of leaseholder charges to ensure Southwark has an accurate, fair and transparent system of charging leaseholders for the services they receive.
- (7) That council assembly notes the focus of the debate as outlined to all councillors in advance:
  - How do we balance the increasing demand for the council to supply housing with the need to maintain existing stock and with the limited geographical and financial resources available?
  - The proportion of housing stock in the private rented sector has ballooned in the last 30 years to a point where the numbers of private rented, privately owned and council homes are roughly equal. How do we ensure tenants rights and responsibilities are guaranteed in a sector over which the council has less control?

- What role can other social landlords play in helping to ensure we deliver the housing which Southwark needs?
- (8) That council assembly welcomes the council's decision to set up an independent housing commission to investigate these issues outlined above and calls on members and residents to contribute their views.

### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Housing Services**

1. The council is currently carrying out an operational review of its homelessness, housing advice and options service to look at how we can most effectively assist those households that apply to us for housing. For many households, there will be no realistic prospect of offering them a council or housing association home and we need to be clear with those residents about how they can best help themselves to meet their own housing needs and preferences.
2. From February 2012, we plan to re-launch our online housing advice service which has been re-focussed to provide clear advice in plain English for residents on the options available to them. We continue to regularly carry out exit surveys at our Homesearch Centre to obtain customer feedback and are also currently reviewing all of our housing information leaflets. Our social housing lettings agency has got off to a good start this year and is seen by others as a model of good practice. We continue to prevent homelessness effectively through the use of the private rented sector, although this will become increasingly difficult as the welfare reforms restrict access for households on low income to private rented homes.
3. From January 2012, we will be carrying a review of our lettings policy and have set up a cross party group to look at best practice and recommend changes. We expect the review to report to Cabinet with its conclusions in December 2012, following extensive public consultation, with any changes being implemented in 2013.
4. Our 5 year Warm, Dry and Safe programme was agreed by Cabinet in October 2011 and has also now been formally signed off by the Tenant Services Authority, who have extended the council's deadline for achieving 85% decent homes to 2015. This is subject to the Homes and Communities Agency confirming the remainder of the government decent homes backlog funding and we expect to have notification on this in January 2012. We are currently working with residents on the development of a 30 year housing asset management plan to further support our strategic approach to investment in council homes in the borough.
5. Decent housing is being achieved in Southwark through two main programmes. The first, focussing on the council's own housing stock, by investing to make all homes warm, dry and safe. Cabinet agreed a 5 year programme in October to bring homes to the Government's decent homes standard by investing a minimum of £326m over the next 5 years. The council's housing stock already provides for a diverse and mixed community reflective of Southwark's make up. The council will continue to improve housing management standards and also work with partners to make a contribution to community safety and health.
6. The second approach is to enable the delivery of high quality new housing in the borough, including affordable housing. Clear planning policies in general

conformity with the London Plan, together with Area Action Plans in a number of local areas provide developers with a clear understanding of Southwark's priorities. In the affordable sector, the council works closely with housing associations and the Homes and Communities Agency to support the delivery of new housing supply, a large proportion of which is made available to residents on the housing list.

7. Option appraisal exercises have been undertaken on Abbeyfield Estate, Four Squares Estate and the low rise part of Hawkstone Estate. The findings for Hawkstone were reported to Cabinet on 13 December 2011, and the preferred option of enhanced refurbishment was agreed. The scheme will now be worked up in detail, for delivery in 2012/13. The process continues for Abbeyfield Estate and Four Squares Estate. What is common to all three studies is the importance of working with residents to understand the relationship between the various considerations and their relevant priorities. The commitment of residents in all three studies is greatly appreciated. The role of independent resident advisors in progressing the exercises should also be recognised. Dialogue with residents of the estates will continue to be at the core of the process. At Hawkstone, that will now turn to the delivery stage; at Abbeyfield and Four Squares, the focus will be on appraising the various options identified and working through the consultative process to reach a preferred option in each case.
8. The Housing Commission will explore options for the future financing, ownership and operation of Southwark's housing stock beyond 2015/16 (when the current five year investment programme comes to an end). The aim will be to examine proposals and make recommendations for an investment strategy, for up to thirty years, that is sustainable, affordable to the council and breaks the current cycle of an escalating demand for resources to maintain the quality of the stock. This will be a unique opportunity for an in-depth study of investment options aimed at providing a robust strategy for Southwark's housing stock for up to the next thirty years. This study will consider all key issues that could impact on a longer term approach for council housing including strategies around allocations, rents, area and estate based regeneration, future funding streams and so on.
9. The review of revenue service charges was completed by the external independent auditors in August 2009. The seventeen recommendations were made the subject of an action plan and progress in responding to these recommendations has been monitored over the past two years. One of the final actions to be delivered is the implementation of the IT system dealing with the billing and collection of service charges. This is due to go live in April 2012. The system will enable homeowners to access their accounts, statements and invoices on line.

## **RETENTION OF SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS IN DULWICH**

At council assembly on Tuesday 29 November 2011 a motion on the retention of school crossing patrols in Dulwich was moved by Councillor Toby Eckersley and seconded by Councillor Michael Mitchell. The motion was subsequently amended and the amended motion stands referred to the cabinet as a recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

- (1) That council assembly;
  - Notes the unprecedented financial situation the council must deal with following estimated Tory/Liberal Democrat government cuts over three years of £90 million to the council's non-housing budget.
  - Notes that as part of looking for all possible sources of funding or ways of continuing to run school crossing patrols, senior council officers are currently in discussions with local schools; both private and community and local residents across the borough.
- (2) That council assembly further notes following the deliberations of the Democracy Commission, the cabinet intends to propose as part of the forthcoming budget process the introduction of a cleaner, greener, safer revenue budget, equating to £10,000 per ward, for community councils to determine from 1 April 2012.
- (3) That, therefore, council assembly invites Dulwich and those community councils affected by previously agreed budget savings to school crossing patrols to consider whether they wish to prioritise the continued funding of those crossing patrols as part of this cleaner, greener safer revenue spend from 2012/13 onwards.

### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure**

1. In the 2011/12 budget there was a proposed a saving allocated to removing school crossing patrols at light controlled crossings. National guidance recognises such locations as posing a lower risk than sites with no traffic controlled systems and such a service is not provided by many other boroughs. However, following concern from some schools and parents this cut was deferred until 2012/13, pending a further review and consultation on the proposal.
2. In the review officers are exploring how schools, the community and the voluntary and business sector might assist with alternative ways of providing this service prior to taking forward the reduction.
3. Initial feedback from the review has included the following:-

- That while the locations under review do have light controls the community feel that the exceptional nature of traffic at the locations require the additional services of a SCP
  - The schools affected do not feel that this is a service that should fall to them to either fund or manage
  - There are concerns about the adequacy, commitment and legal liabilities entailed in delivering the service through a volunteer workforce
  - External sponsorship of the service could be explored
  - Use of other parking control staff to undertake the functions could be explored but this would break a valuable personal link that the current staff have with the schools and children
  - The council should consider using part of the £100k discretionary spend available in the TfL funded Local Implementation Programme for SCP's.
4. Should Cabinet agree to the recommendations of the Democracy Commission the £50,000 reduction in the school crossing patrol service budget at light controlled crossings in 2012/13 will be confirmed. However patrols will be retained until each of the community councils concerned has had an opportunity to consider how it wishes to spend the new money to be allocated to it. If the community council decides to fund the patrols then the service will continue unaffected. Should the community council choose not to fund the patrols, in accordance with local wishes, these will cease in the autumn term 2012.
  5. Officers will not be undertaking any further risk assessments as committing further resources on risk assessments is not warranted. Should any community council require any further data to make their decision the council will assist with this.
  6. Officers will also continue to look at the other aspects of the service that have been raised by the community, namely potential reductions in management costs, potential sponsorship of the service.

## **SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM SERGEANTS**

At council assembly on Tuesday 29 November 2011 a motion on safer neighbourhood team sergeants was proposed by Councillor Catherine Bowman and seconded by Councillor Robin Crookshank Hilton. The motion was subsequently amended and the amended motion stands referred to the cabinet as a recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

- (1) That council assembly regrets the loss of five safer neighbourhood team sergeants in Southwark which is a direct result of the government's 20% cut in the police grant. Council assembly further regrets the decision by the Mayor for London to make these cuts irrespective of the level of crime in any borough.
- (2) That council assembly notes that MPs from all parties had an opportunity to vote against this 20% cut in funding if they wanted to preserve police numbers in Southwark. It welcomes the fact Harriet Harman and Tessa Jowell voted against this cut, but regrets that Simon Hughes, once again, abstained.
- (3) That council assembly notes that the council's budget allocated £5.5 million in contingency funds and that the figure of £9.5 million is incorrectly calculated. Council assembly further notes that the quarter 2 revenue monitoring report considered by cabinet on 22 November indicates that £2.6 million of this contingency fund may need to be used to offset pressures in departmental budgets this year.
- (4) That council assembly believes the council has demonstrated its ability to protect people from the worst excesses of the government; for instance, by introducing a £3 million youth fund as a direct response to the cut to educational maintenance allowances and the trebling of tuition fees.
- (5) That in the circumstances, council assembly urges the government to reverse its reckless cut to the Metropolitan Police's budget and calls on Mayor Boris Johnson to maintain police numbers in Southwark.

### **Comments of the Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure**

1. The decision by the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) to cut safer neighbourhood team sergeants was not one that was supported by the council. Each ward in Southwark has specific challenges and we have made it clear to the MPA that cutting posts in Southwark at the same level as other London Boroughs, which do not experience the level of crime and anti social, does not make sense. Having taken advice from senior police officers in Southwark it is also likely that the MPA would not accept the additional funding at this stage, as they are looking to reduce staffing and staffing costs.
2. We believe a better approach from the MPA would be to review their decision and place sergeants in those wards in London where they will have the biggest impact and reduce posts in the capitals low crime wards.



3. In terms of cuts, Southwark Council has faced one of the highest levels of cuts in London, considerably higher than those required from the MPA. As a result the council has had to make significant savings of £2.8m from community safety. This has been compounded by a significant loss of central government grant funding for crime prevention and intervention work. 73% of government grant was removed last year amounting to £2.65m.
4. Lobbying the MPS and GLA to ensure that Southwark has the policing numbers that it needs, is our best approach.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME**

At council assembly on Tuesday 29 November 2011 a motion on the local government pension scheme was proposed by Councillor Patrick Diamond and seconded by Councillor Mark Glover. The motion was subsequently amended and the amended motion stands referred to the cabinet as a recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

1. That council assembly notes that the local government pension scheme is a sustainable, good quality pension scheme that benefits from being funded and locally managed. It is valuable to employers and employees alike.
2. That council assembly is concerned by proposals announced by the Chancellor in the last comprehensive spending review to impose an extra 3.2% contribution tax on scheme members, increasing scheme average member contributions from 6.6% to 9.8%.
3. That council assembly also notes that none of the additional revenue raised from this increase will go towards improving the financial security of the scheme and risks the sustainability of public sector pension schemes in the long term by encouraging people to opt out of occupational schemes because they cannot afford to pay this increase; ultimately costing the tax payer more in the future.
4. That council assembly welcomes the recent but limited change in position from the government and hopes that this indicates, after months of grandstanding, a willingness to finally enter into proper negotiations with trade unions.
5. That council assembly believes that both private and public service workers have suffered as a result of the austerity measures of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government and regrets the impact any industrial action will have on people in Southwark who rely on council services. We urge both the government and unions to explore every other possible course of action.