

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2012

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN MORRISSEY

Has he received a reply to his email to Simon Hughes MP asking him if he will vote for the government's NHS Bill?

RESPONSE

No, at time of writing I had not.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN MORRISSEY

Thank you Madam Mayor, and thank you to the leader for the answer. Simon Hughes emailed today claiming he did not support the health bill in its initial form, does he find this strange given that he voted for the bill at the third reading?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Morrissey for her supplemental question. At the time that this answer was drafted in writing I had not received a response from the Bermondsey and Old Southwark MP. He did reply at 5.15pm this evening and I think quite bizarrely he said that when the bill was introduced there was an unacceptable emphasis given to the role of the private sector in the bill. Now that did not stop him voting for the bill at all stages actually and it is only, he says, now when the bill has been amended and all the amendments have been made by the House of Lords and accepted by the government that he finds the bill to be acceptable; so it is utterly bizarre that somebody can say, Councillor Morrissey, that something is unacceptable in its original form yet support it and vote for it all the way through. There we are, 'say one thing and do another' Liberal Democrats all over again.

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

How many Southwark Council homes have been sold off since 2002? How many of these were through right to buy and how many were through void disposals? Please could he provide the answer broken down by year and by the number of bedrooms?

RESPONSE

The breakdown of housing stock lost since 2002 is shown in the table below. The year on year breakdown is not available by bedsize, but the various categories of disposal are shown for completeness.

DISPOSALS BY CATEGORY											
	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
										to date	
Right to buy sales	975	1458	1742	733	207	180	45	23	23	24	5410
Deconversions	5	18	8	16	22		53	15	40		177
Demolition	110	152	93	694	263	359	648	434	154	26	2933
Dulwich College L/H	59	12									71
Amos Estate lease return						3	72	59			134
Other disposals	54	18	25	9	18	49	44	76	111	35	439
											9164

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thanks Madam Mayor and thanks to the leader for his answer. I have got here Councillor Wingfield's speech at the January council meeting where he says '10,000 council homes were sold off under the last administration'. These figures do not say that and in fact it appears your administration is getting well on the way to the same figures and overtaking them. So will he apologise for Councillor Wingfield's misleading comments and will he apologise to the residents of the Four Squares that he is continuing to sell off council homes when his manifesto which I have in front of me says he is lobbying for retention of council housing?

RESPONSE

Well, I thank Councillor Al-Samerai for her supplemental question on that. I think that in fact in a subsequent letter to you Councillor Wingfield said it was over 8,000 properties that have been sold.

I am not apologising for anybody or anything that has been said. It is not for me to apologise, what I will say is that what I am concerned about and what Councillor Wingfield is concerned about is the impact which your government's right to buy changes will have on properties in the borough. You can see in the current year 24 properties have been bought under the right to buy. Within one week of Grant Shapps announcing the changes to the right to buy regulations so that people can have a £75,000 discount, over 200 people contacted the council about buying their home in Southwark. That is the way – loss of council housing for people in this borough, not just for this year but for ever; so shame on them for the change in the way they have supported the right to buy.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS BROWN

How many more people aged 18-24 have been on Jobseekers' Allowance for six months or longer since this time last year in a) Southwark as a whole b) each parliamentary constituency within Southwark?

RESPONSE

Table 1 shows the number of young people who have been claiming for more than six months. 55 of the 325 claimants in the Dulwich and West Norwood constituency are Southwark residents.

Table 1: 18-24 year olds claiming Jobseekers Allowance for more than six months

Constituency	February 2011	February 2012	Total increase	Percentage increase
Bermondsey and Old Southwark	160	330	170	106.3%
Camberwell and Peckham	260	450	190	73.1%
Dulwich and West Norwood	125	325	200	160.0%
Southwark	445	835	390	87.6%

*The Dulwich and West Norwood Constituency contains parts of Lambeth

Long term unemployment usually refers to those that have been unemployed for more than 12 months; table 2 shows the number of long term unemployed (by this measure) young people as at February 2011 and 2012. 20 of the 110 claimants in the Dulwich and West Norwood constituency are Southwark residents.

Table 2: 18-24 year olds claiming Jobseekers Allowance for more than 12 months

Constituency	February 2011	February 2012	Total increase	Percentage increase
Bermondsey and Old Southwark	70	110	40	57.1%
Camberwell and Peckham	90	175	85	94.4%
Dulwich and West Norwood	45	110	65	144.4%
Southwark	165	300	135	81.8%

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS BROWN

Thank you Madam Mayor I am grateful for the response from the leader. The figures show a shocking increase in the number of young people claiming job seekers' allowance; absolutely shocking and so depressing that there is such an appalling waste of talent in our area. As a supplementary I wanted to ask what his assessment of last week's budget is and what if any impact would it have in youth unemployment in Southwark?

RESPONSE

Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you Councillor Brown for your supplemental question. Well, I don't know if there is anything in the budget that shone out in terms of tackling the issues of youth unemployment. I think there are two statistics in recent days that are particularly worrying. I think one was today that showed in fact the last quarter of last year the economy shrank by more than what was initially estimated; shrank by 0.3% rather than 0.2% that have been estimated, that is bad news for everybody in our borough, and secondly there was an article in the Guardian on 9 March 2012 which talked about and highlighted the fact that amongst our young unemployed, and it is bound to be a relevant statistic for our borough, in fact black and minority ethnic youngsters have suffered disproportionately, seeing a rise of something in the order of 28% of youth unemployment amongst black youngsters doubling to 56%.

Now that is very worrying; it is a very worrying statistic for us in our borough and it is right that we as a local authority do everything we can both with the youth fund and the community restoration fund to try and stimulate business, to try and stimulate economy right across the borough; and why we support, as a council and as an administration, investment into our borough which brings jobs and opportunities and prospect to people who otherwise face a lifetime or years on the dole. That is unacceptable and is something we will oppose in every opportunity.

QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

How much of the discretionary £100,000 for highways will the council spend on Trixi mirrors given its u-turn on improving the borough's cycling infrastructure?

RESPONSE

Councillor Hargrove is still considering the different options for the allocation of the discretionary funding for 2012/13.

Officers have identified and prioritised 17 possible borough locations for the installation of Trixi Mirrors. As the mirrors are fixed to signals, which are the responsibility of Transport for London, we are currently awaiting their guidance and approval.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

Thank you Madam Mayor. Councillor John, I was very pleased to see in your answer that Councillor Hargrove is considering funding for Trixi Mirrors out of his discretionary funding. I think this really would be a new investment in cycling infrastructure; I am very pleased to see it, especially as it is only £2,000 per mirror. I think you said in the Southwark News recently that you used to ride until your bike was taken and I really hope you do it again. I think if I can get on a bike in my condition then nobody has any excuse. I do hope that you do it again so you do appreciate the absolute need to improve safety at junctions and the impact that Trixi Mirrors would have, in particular when cars are turning left they simply don't see cyclists. I think it is one of the most dangerous situations that cyclists can be in.

My supplemental question is that I would like ask you to commit to proactively seeking approval from TfL rather than just awaiting it so we can really get on with

this, and hopefully reporting back to all councillors before the time of the next meeting how this discretionary funding is going to be spent, so we can get on improving the situation and don't have any more deaths in this borough through dangerous driving for cyclists?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Rajan. Yes, I am going to get back on my bike. I have pledged to do that once I have got all the marathon training out of the way and I'm not running everywhere I can cycle everywhere; I am looking forward to that.

In terms of Trixi Mirrors, I think rarely a day goes by when I am not standing over Councillor Hargrove saying 'Have we heard anymore? What is the news on this?' because it is TfL who have to issue new guidance regulations just to let us know how it can be done. We also have to find the capital to do it, which we will find, we will also have to identify a revenue stream. It will cost around £500 a year to maintain Trixi Mirrors, so we don't want to do something without identifying the revenue as well, but we are determined to do it and I hope very soon something good and very positive to announce. We will bring it back to council assembly or Councillor Hargrove will announce it as soon as he possibly can, but thank you for raising the point. It is an important one.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

Can he provide an update on the meeting he and the cabinet member for transport, recycling and the environment held with Southwark cyclists?

RESPONSE

Councillor Hargrove and I met with representatives of Southwark Cyclists on 26 January to discuss how we could work more closely together to improve safety for existing cyclists in Southwark and encourage more people to take up cycling in the borough. At the meeting we agreed to establish a joint working group of Southwark Cyclist and council representatives, including officers and chaired by the cabinet member for transport, environment and recycling, that would meet regularly. As part of its work plan it would investigate how to establish a new network of traffic-free or light cycle routes around the borough.

This first of these meetings took place on 1 March. The group agreed that it needed to concentrate on delivery and discussed its future ambitions and how it could work most effectively with that outcome in mind. The next meeting will take place on 3 April.

I'm completely convinced that this partnership with Southwark Cyclists is the right approach to improving our roads for cyclists, taking advantage of their unique combination of expertise and awareness of the day-to-day experiences of cyclists across our borough.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

I would like to thank the leader for his response, and as we are on the theme of cycling, I would like to inform the council I will be doing the London to Brighton cycle ride on behalf of the British Heart Foundation in the next couple of months.

I am very pleased to see this improvement in partnership with the Southwark Cyclists, but one of the of the key concerns when we were here at a meeting last time was safety on the Transport for London roads within Southwark, and I just wondered if the leader would like to update us if he received any further correspondence from TfL or the Mayor on any improvements they are likely to make on this issue?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Glover for his supplemental question. I did receive a response from my initial letter. I cannot remember if that was between the last council assembly and this one, but in any event it was not very satisfactory. It was to the effect 'We are doing what we need to do and don't you worry your head about it over in Southwark' so I followed it up with the Mayor and Peter Hendy again, asking really what are they going to do and when are they going to do it?

I think one good bit of news – I said there was no good news in Southwark in the budget last week; there was one tiny bit of good news on the cycling front, which I think most members saw, it was worth highlighting that the Chancellor gave TfL £10 or £15 million, £15 million to tackle dangerous junctions; one of which of course is the Elephant & Castle northern roundabout, so we are hoping that a chunk of that £15 million will come and pay for the much needed works at the northern roundabout in due course. So let's hope that is a little bit of good news from last week's budget, but in terms of TfL we are keeping pressing them for urgent action on the roads that they control. It seem a bit of hiatus at the moment, I can't imagine why, but hopefully normal service will be resumed after a couple of weeks.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Will the leader commit to implementing the recommendations of the 2007 safety audit in order to address the safety issues regularly experienced by pedestrians and cyclists at the junction between East Dulwich Grove, Townley Road and Green Dale in Village ward?

RESPONSE

A safety audit was carried out in 2007, with recommendations focussing on management, maintenance and a review of the traffic signal controls. At the time the recommendations were not implemented due to local member concerns.

Having had this issue brought to our attention, the recommendations of the report have been reviewed and a site inspection will be carried out and any amendments or repairs to the road markings will be undertaken. When reviewing the road markings, to improve visibility of cyclists exiting the Green Dale walking cycling link through the junction, cycle logos will be installed.

It should be noted that the 2007 report recommended a number to changes to the traffic signals. This would need to be reviewed in light of changes to the use of the junction since 2007 and changes to Transport for London's assessment criteria for approving changes to traffic signals.

To date no funding is available to undertake this work. However this administration has committed to identifying whether funds from the 2012/13 discretionary funding could be used to update and review the 2007 safety audit.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Thank you Madam Mayor and I would like to thank the leader for his reply, and I would like to ask a supplemental question about sheep pens. Make sure you are listening.

One of the most important recommendations in the 2007 audit was to remove the sheep pens from this crossing, noting that they were too small to accommodate the high volume of students that were crossing during the school run, thereby suggesting that it was necessary to keep the lollypop crossing guards at this junction unless the sheep pens were removed. So I am trying to get you to commit to removing the sheep pens as a first phase so that we can then review the need to keep the crossing guards there, and then we can use our devolved funding for football teams and youth clubs and pension clubs like everybody else in the borough is getting to do. So will you commit to that?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Crookshank Hilton. We are certainly committed to using some of the discretionary funding to looking at this junction, two junctions, in any event. It is quite interesting what we are seeing going on with TfL roads; they are removing all their metal barriers, aren't they? We've seen it down Jamaica Road. So if that is something we can do quickly and safely, I am not going to make a commitment this evening because I have not read the report in detail, but if it is something we can do quickly and safely then Councillor Hargrove will no doubt act on it with officers accordingly, so thank you again and we will keep you posted on that one.

6. WITHDRAWN

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Following the environment themed council assembly meeting held on 25 January 2012, how much new funding has the council committed to increase the uptake of cycling and improve cycling infrastructure in Southwark?

RESPONSE

The council has – with Southwark Cyclists, the local branch of the London Cycling Campaign – agreed a fresh approach within existing resources.

The member will understand that given coalition government cuts we aren't able to commit additional resources to items without removing resources from elsewhere. He will further understand that any proposal to redirect resources from road maintenance to dedicated cycling schemes will make the ordinary Southwark road network more dangerous for cyclists.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank the leader for his answer, but can he confirm that what his so-called 'fresh approach to cycling' in the borough actually amounts to, is a cut in the funding to crucial cycle safety and awareness schemes in the region of some £70,000 I understand, and does he agree with me that as the borough with the second highest cycling potential of any borough in London, this council should and could be doing more to increase the uptake of safe cycling?

RESPONSE

Yes I do agree; and I think we have got some bold targets within our council plan regarding uptake of cycling, but in terms of cuts in money I can't answer that; I can't remember the figures off the top of my head. We will go away and look at it. But absolutely take it from me that throughout this year Councillor Hargrove and I have been working incredibly hard on cycle safety. We are utterly committed to making our roads the safest in London. One more injury or death is going to be one more injury or death too many as far as I am concerned in our borough, and we recognise the need to act urgently and do as much as we can. Some of these things take time, budgets to assess, priorities etc, but we are doing that and we are acting accordingly. So I hope that is some reassurance; as I say, this really is at the top of every political agenda, I think, right across the country and it does need to stay there until we have sorted this out.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

Can the leader provide an update on the performance of Southwark's housing contractors?

RESPONSE

There are a number of different contractors delivering repairs and maintenance to the housing service. The four main contractors are: OCO and T Brown Ltd for heating and hot water contracts (ECON) and Southwark Building Services (SBS, internal contractor) and Morrison Facilities Services for general repairs and maintenance (R&M).

The contracts have four main performance indicators which are assessed via customer survey or system analysis.

A summary of performance to the year to date (end of February 2012) is as follows:

	ECON	R&M
Satisfaction	78.2%	79.0%
Appointments kept	89.7%	88.5%
Completed on time	80.7%	91.8%
Completed first visit	61.8%	71.6%

Category analysis - missed appointments by contractor

Complaints received 1 April 2011 - 29 February 2012 that were about missed appointments:

Morrison	SBS	OCO	T Brown	Total
156	126	77	61	420

R&M	ECON
282	138

Stage 1 complaints received

Complaints received 1 April 2011 – 29 February 2012:

Repairs	Engineering
2,149	805

The strategic director of housing is considering the future needs of this service and a decision will not be made until the end of March.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR TIM McNALLY

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to thank the leader for his response. It is no surprise that one of the housing contractors is performing appallingly, I did at one of the meetings of the housing scrutiny committee state our position that I thought this should be brought in-house, and yes, some of us do go to housing scrutiny, but I noticed the very last paragraph of his answer is saying that the decision was going to be made at the end of March. Looking at the diary, it is the end of March; it is the 28th you know, it is very, very close to the end of March. Could he enlighten us on whether or not this failing contractor is going to be shown the door?

RESPONSE

Councillor McNally will know I can't say things at council assembly which would be utterly inappropriate because of contractual relations that we have with these people. I am not as a ward councillor in South Camberwell, and I imagine that most of the councillors in the south of the borough, are not impressed with the service which we receive to say the very least. They have really let down, I think, the residents of our borough and you are going to know in the next three days, Tim, what the council is going to do and I believe it is going to be decisive action which I hope will start really seeing a shift and improvement in the service, repair services which tenants and leaseholders receive across our borough.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Does the leader share the concerns of local Liberal Democrat councillors about the closure of the lifts at both Canada Water and Bermondsey tube stations for the same three month period?

RESPONSE

I raised my concerns about the closure of the lifts at Canada Water and Bermondsey with the Mayor of London directly as soon as I heard about the possibility of closure.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

Will the leader sign up to the 'Love London, Go Dutch' Cycling Campaign?

RESPONSE

The Love London, Go Dutch campaign is calling on candidates for the London mayoral elections to sign-up to a new approach to cycling. I am not a mayoral candidate and therefore not in a position to commit Transport for London to such a new approach.

The council has been very clear of our intention – working with the Southwark branch of the London Cycling Campaign, who are running Love London, Go Dutch – to introduce a new traffic free and light network on the roads we control.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Does the leader think that the LGBT community is part of Southwark's heritage?

RESPONSE

Yes.

12. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

What is the council doing regarding dog fouling on the Evelyn Lowe Estate?

RESPONSE

All estate grounds are checked for dog fouling on a daily basis and the dog fouling is removed when found by estate cleaning staff. In addition cleaning staff regularly liaise with colleagues in the area housing offices and the community warden service when we become aware of individual residents or other members of the public persistently allowing their dogs to foul the common areas of the estate in order to take the appropriate action. We continue to encourage ward councillors to report instances of dog fouling.

13. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

What is the council doing for damp on the Arnold and Dickens Estates?

RESPONSE

Damp on the Arnold and Dickens Estate is no more prevalent than those in other buildings of a similar age and construction. From our inspections of such dwellings, in the large majority of cases, the reported damp is condensation related. In such instances, we offer residents practical advice on how to best alleviate the issues by taking steps to help prevent excess moisture which can build up in properties through everyday use. This includes the use of heating and ventilation in the property. There are many ways to do this, including ensuring that the heating of the property is controlled to increase the level of the "dew" point of surfaces, that fixed vents are kept open to allow the property to breathe and moisture in the property is contained by keeping lids on pots when cooking / doors closed, etc. These steps, and more, are described in the condensation information leaflet we provide to residents who report issues of condensation related dampness. In some cases we may arrange for improvement works to be

undertaken such as installing extractor fans and damp proofing to the interior of walls.

It is important that residents report issues to us so we can look at each case on its own merit as there are a variety of different factors which will have a major impact on levels of mould in a property, such as the position of a dwelling in its block, alterations made to the property, and the number of occupants who live there. Mould in properties can also be as a result of defects to the building such as roof/gutter faults and leaking pipes. There are less common defects which can cause problems with mould in properties, and our technical team now have access to sophisticated diagnostic equipment in order to accurately assess complex cases, in order to affect the most appropriate repairs.

14. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

What mechanism does the council use to ensure every council tenant's electricity meter is checked?

RESPONSE

Electrical meters are the responsibility of the electricity supplier and are sealed to ensure that no third parties can access. The installation and manufacturer of the meters are governed by the Electricity Act 1989 and various regulations to ensure they are fit for purpose. If a fault occurs, the suppliers provide an emergency service 24 hours per day, throughout the year.

Meters in communal areas are checked during our electrical testing programme and if any faults are identified, these are passed to the supplier.

15. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

Given the level of youth anti-social behaviour caused by alcohol in South Bermondsey ward, how many premises which sell alcohol has been visited in the last 12 months? How many have resulted in prosecutions?

RESPONSE

1,301 premises that sell alcohol were visited by environmental health and trading standards in Southwark during the last 12 months. 31 of these premises were located in South Bermondsey. 25 were compliant on first visit. The remaining six were non-compliant on initial visit, a warning letter was sent to each premise and all six were compliant on revisit. No prosecutions were necessary.

Trading standards have attempted 42 underage test purchases of alcohol across the borough with a compliance rate of 67%. There were no test purchases carried out in South Bermondsey Ward during the last 12 months and so no prosecutions were undertaken (this is because in 2010/11 four test purchases were done and the premises were found to be compliant).

However in the SE16 area 12 alcohol test purchases have been attempted with three sales (75% compliance). These sellers were subject to compulsory training and passed this. They were then subject to further test purchasing and did not sell.

In the SE1 area five alcohol test purchases have been attempted with one sale (80% compliance). The premises concerned have been reported for further action (prosecution and/or licence review).

16. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

What is being done to support Southwark employees prepare for redundancy/changes to work environment?

RESPONSE

The council has comprehensive policy "Reorganisation, redeployment & redundancy", available via the Source, that takes managers through the process of reorganisation and the formal mechanisms to implement change. In addition to the provisions of the policy, the council:

- Provides interview skills training for staff to help them prepare for competitive interviews within the council.
- Gives redeployees priority consideration for jobs in the council.
- Has an employee support programme through working transitions to deliver comprehensive career coaching. They assist people to apply for new roles in the council, help them recognise and build on their skills, apply for jobs outside the council – or look for a change in direction; return to education, self employed etc. The service aims to recognise that many staff have great potential and skills and with support, change may open up new opportunities and help people achieve a desirable outcome.
- Supports people to look for redeployment opportunities including instances of work shadowing where people were given the opportunity to work alongside other staff to understand whether the change was right for them.
- Provides access to services for those who find aspects of change difficult to handle alone; counselling service, the chaplain, plus, where suitable, external outplacement support.
- Applies the principles of the performance management to equip people to take on new or amended roles; through effective work planning and learning and development.
- Actions have aimed to provide people opportunities to remain as effective employees find a new internal career or, where people choose to leave, giving them the opportunity to exploit their skills and prepare for a new career outside the council.

17. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Would the leader join Tessa Jowell MP and Harriet Harman MP in condemning Unite leader, Len McCluskey, for encouraging his members to engage in all forms of civil disobedience within the law during the Olympics?

RESPONSE

The London Olympics is an opportunity for London to come together and demonstrate that we are the greatest city in the world. I think anybody who jeopardised that would be deeply irresponsible and that any such action would be self-defeating. This does not mean that I do not understand or share the entirely reasonable strength of feeling about the coalition government's brutal cuts.

18. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR CLAIRE HICKSON (BOROUGH AND BANKSIDE COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Can the cabinet member provide an update on discussions with Leathermarket joint management board (JMB) to deliver new homes for Borough and Bankside?

RESPONSE

Leathermarket board members and managers met with Councillors Colley and Livingstone and council officers on 16 January 2012 starting exploratory talks about Leathermarket being able to develop social housing in their area. Councillor Colley has asked regeneration officers to explore the options for new affordable housing to be developed in the area.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR CLAIRE HICKSON (BOROUGH AND BANKSIDE COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

I would like to thank the cabinet member for the answer to the question. I just wanted to find out if there has been an update on what had happened and what work had been done since that meeting in January?

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

Thank you; it is actually going to be me rather than Councillor Wingfield answering this question. I would like to thank Councillor Hickson for her question. Since the meeting in January, officers in housing and regeneration have been having further discussions and exchange of information with the JMB on principles of development. Some initial scoping works of potential sites has been done and the discussions have also included some delivery options with a general principle of trying to adopt the simplest approach for an initial site or sites, while looking at perhaps more sophisticated arrangements and funding options longer term. The main principles and delivery options are going to be worked up, working towards a cabinet decision in the summer which will include a general approach to building new affordable homes; so not necessarily just at Leathermarket.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES (PECKHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

How can businesses in Peckham get involved with the council's community restoration fund and bid to be one of the government's "Portas Pilot" areas to help with the renewal of Peckham town centre?

RESPONSE

The community restoration fund has been created to help restore local community pride and deliver long term solutions to support businesses and young people across the borough in response to the disturbances in August 2011. The cabinet member for regeneration and corporate strategy met with business owners and traders in Peckham in January 2012 to understand the issues facing businesses in Peckham and consider how the fund could support the renewal of Peckham town centre, as part of a series of meetings with local business leaders and business organisations across Southwark.

The fund is intended to support improvements to the branding and marketing of high streets and town centres that will attract increased footfall, enable businesses to adapt and innovate in response to regeneration, and encourage businesses to work together collaboratively to share ideas and resources and achieve increased economic growth in their area. The process by which business groups can apply for funding will be announced shortly.

Meanwhile, a programme of work is under way in Peckham to develop a proposal for a "Portas Pilot" town team bid in Peckham (submission deadline - 30 March). This work is being undertaken by the company that manages Better Bankside business improvement district in order to provide a business-led approach backed by expertise in bringing businesses together around practical projects to improve trading and growth; a successful proposal requires a business lead. Consultation events and door-knocking with individual businesses in Rye Lane and Peckham High Street took place in the week 12-17 March. Over 50 businesses have given their views to date. The results of this face-to-face engagement and the accompanying survey questionnaires will be assessed in order to shape the bid this week (19-24 March), resulting in a final proposal that sets out a model and a project to give the engagement a practical focus and a unique selling point. Note that more active participation of businesses in Peckham is the intended outcome of this work rather than the starting point.

It is recognised that the Portas Pilot bidding will be hugely oversubscribed; in the event that this bid doesn't make the cut, then the efforts in bringing it together are clearly likely to leave a legacy of new ideas for business engagement, new business leadership in Peckham and strong proposals for a bid to the community restoration fund.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER (BERMONDSEY COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Following an extremely successful Bermondsey community council meeting which discussed domestic violence, how many incidents of violence from teenagers to parents have been recorded in the borough, what is the council doing to ensure incidents are being reported and addressed?

RESPONSE

Between the start of April 2011 and the end of January 2012, 46 incidents were reported to the police that involved a teenager being violent towards a parent or step-parent.

The council and partners, under the Safer Southwark Partnership (SSP) encourage reporting of all types of violence either to the police, or victim services in order that victim issues are addressed. It is particularly complex when a victim

is a parent/carer and the perpetrator is their child. Whilst it is impossible to ensure all crimes are reported, the council and partners work to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence and increase confidence of victims to come forward. A recent example of the work undertaken by the partnership is the public awareness campaign run by the police over the Christmas holiday period.

If we become aware of such a case, a referral would be made to Southwark Advocacy Services (provided by Solace, the council's newly commissioned domestic abuse service) who are able to respond and address this issue.

The service will start on 2 April 2012 and will work with all victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse in all of its forms, including child on parent violence. Each case of child on parent domestic violence will be unique and require an in depth assessment to support bespoke action planning tailored to needs of the family.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK (ROTHERHITHE COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Given the closure of the job centre by the previous Labour government, the closure of the health care centre and the moving of the library, does the cabinet member for regeneration and corporate strategy welcome the setting up of a charity shop by the community and local churches? Will she join me in calling for more resources and regeneration of Albion Street?

RESPONSE

I recently met with Albion Street traders and a representative of the potential charity shop in relation to the community restoration fund.

It is clear that Albion Street businesses suffer from a lack of footfall and that the approach of the previous administration – a largely physical and significantly under funded shop front improvement scheme – was insufficient.

The initial scoping work was based on improvements to four to five shops and though the budget has remained the same for this work, improvement work was completed on a greater number of shops; 12 in total, which meant fewer shops received more comprehensive upgrades.

What is in fact needed is a more holistic approach which will increase the customer base for the businesses which could be about a new retail offer, markets, new developments and improved pedestrian and cycling connections.

I would encourage the Albion Street traders to make a bid to the community restoration fund and to engage with the forthcoming British Land Canada Quay consultation about regeneration and development potential in the area.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK (ROTHERHITHE COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Thank you to the cabinet member for her answer. She forgot to mention that a previous labour administration sold off the public conveniences at St Olav's Square. These have remained an eyesore for a number of years and with the reason stated for the refusal of the Cleaner, Greener, Safer grant by officers

because the future of these toilets were not known and would have been a reason not to grant a CGS grant if we did not know what was going to happen there.

Can I ask the cabinet member, can she ensure that her team liaise with the Albion Street action group and the Norwegian church which are looking to buy that and possibly help them to buy that and convert it into community trust?

RESPONSE

I would like to thank Councillor Hook for his answer, in particular because I saw something this afternoon on this exact site, so I have a helpful answer. I saw in fact today from our officers that they are proposing to release £12,000 of section 106 for design works and improvements to and upgrading of the community open space at St Olav's Square, so hopefully that is welcome news. I know officers from the regeneration department are also working with the church and the groups, and potential compulsory purchase order if that becomes necessary, so we are absolutely committed to working with local residents and local stakeholders to get those toilets back into community ownership; not as toilet use because we want to see it as a community space and to make sure we do not end up with any ugly advertising hoardings hiding our beautiful St Olav's Church.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR RENATA HAMVAS

What has the feedback been like from tenants in sheltered housing regarding the council's proposal to reintroduce wardens for this service?

RESPONSE

I have been visiting the sheltered housing schemes across the borough with officers. A total of seven units have been visited to date as part of the first round of consultation. Tenants have been overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal to reinstate the site based warden service (Monday - Friday). This option was also the preferred option of the cabinet, as set out in the future of sheltered housing cabinet report last December. There are a further 13 schemes to visit by the end of April. Many of the issues that tenants have focused on relate to the general upkeep and maintenance of the schemes.

Officers are working to address these issues and a sheltered housing action plan has been developed to ensure that tasks are recorded as they are being raised and allocated to relevant officers and departments to resolve. This will ensure that tenant feedback is captured and acted upon throughout the consultation period.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR ROWENNA DAVIS

Does she think the government's NHS reforms will improve patient care and staff morale in Southwark?

RESPONSE

If the uncertainty and confusion that the bill has already caused in Southwark and across the country is anything to go by, I can only imagine that it will have the reverse affect. The only way that the process so far can evade the tag "top-down

reorganisation” is if its categorised as a top-down disorganisation. The bill has already drained NHS resources as the service has responded to the government’s demands and this can only have had an impact on the service that patients receive. It cannot be entirely coincidental that the number of people waiting more than 18 weeks for treatment in Southwark was up 171% last year.

The government has tried again and again to change the public’s and professional’s minds about the bill - but they have failed. They’ve held a listening exercise and a summit, they’ve made over a thousand amendments, but they are continuing along a course that will wreck our NHS - and local people know it. I shudder to think what further impact the changes in the bill will have once they are given royal assent and how the morale of those frontline staff who just want to get on with their job will be further affected.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR THE RIGHT REVEREND EMMANUEL OYEWOLE

Can she outline in more detail how Southwark’s older and disabled residents will benefit from the council’s new community support programme

RESPONSE

The vision for adult social care is that all people are able to live independent and fulfilling lives, where they are able to make choices about the services that they receive. The community support programme is part of the response to use more innovative ways to help residents support themselves with fewer formal council services in response to these financially challenging times.

The £700,000 community support fund received significant interest, with bids totalling £2,912,291 from a number of high standard applicants. Organisations have demonstrated how they would support the needs of adults with learning disabilities, sensory impairment, HIV and the wider adult client group by providing advice, befriending and wellbeing support.

The service model is designed as a 'customer journey' and is sectioned into three service elements:

- **Information, advice and access:** a single point of access for all client groups where information about benefits maximisation; warmer homes; carers’ services; volunteering opportunities and other simple health and well-being information is delivered.
- **Well-being planning:** This service will support people to take an active role in planning their lives to achieve better health and well-being.
- **Befriending and social interaction development:** to encourage people to remain connected with their communities and reduce isolation.

The benefits reaped from these service elements are positive; there will be a clear pathway for people to receive the appropriate level of community support, which is person centred and proportionate to individual need.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

At the debate at the budget council assembly, the cabinet member for health and adult social care made a number of commitments regarding the client group of the Castle Day Centre. Please can the cabinet member provide an update of actions taken by her department?

RESPONSE

Adult social care is working closely with Together UK who run Castle Day Centre to modernise the support they offer to clients. A team of social workers are working closely with the staff at Castle to review all clients who currently access the day centre. At present, twenty three people have been reviewed and the outcome agreed at panel. The remaining users will all have their reviews completed by the end of April as previously indicated.

All clients who are assessed as being substantial or critical need under the fair access to care guidance and those assessed as moderate with potential to benefit from reablement will be referred to the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust's reablement team for a three month reablement programme. Seven people have been referred to the team so far.

All service users are being kept up to date on the work being done to modernise mental health day centres. Regular information bulletins are published as well as service users having the opportunity to attend regular meetings at the centre. Officers will be visiting the centre in April to include staff and clients in planning the specification for the new wellbeing and information hub and satellites as well as an enhanced reablement team which incorporates South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust's specialist staff and social care support from staff currently working in our mental health day centres.

Together UK are keen to move out of the current building as it is not accessible to physically disabled users and is too large for their ongoing service model. The council lease will continue until they identify a suitable location. I am aware that staff and clients have visited a site close to the current day centre in the past two weeks to assess its suitability.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

Can the cabinet member for health and adult social care confirm that she is happy with the performance of the two new homecare contract providers?

RESPONSE

We are working closely with both of the providers, London Care and Enara around the delivery of the three new home care contracts to ensure that the transition from the previous arrangements to the new arrangements has been as smooth as possible. I have met with the directors of Enara and London Care to discuss the delivery of the new contracts as I recognise the reliance upon and importance of the services provided under these contracts for vulnerable service users.

Enara and London Care are delivering around 12,000 and 14,000 hours respectively on a monthly basis to over 600 individual users between them. It is

important that we continue to work closely with both providers to find ways to improve service delivery and the quality of service for users. The number of service concerns raised in relation to home care has steadily been falling over the past three years and both of the two new providers have received a number of compliments on the quality of their care, particularly around end of life care.

At this stage of the new contracts I'm satisfied with the performance of Enara and London Care. These contracts will allow for better value for money, aid the development of stronger and closer working relationships with the two providers and ensure robust monitoring and reviewing of services; leading to a greater focus on meeting the needs of our clients. The specialist monitoring team within adult social care will continue to ensure effective monitoring of overall quality, safeguarding of vulnerable users and the council's equality agenda.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

Will the cabinet member for health and adult social care provide an update on the shadow health and wellbeing board? Is she going to be democratic and allow a majority of elected members on the board?

RESPONSE

The cabinet will be making a decision on establishing a shadow health and wellbeing board in Southwark on 17 April. (The board will be established in "shadow form" for one year awaiting statutory powers in April 2013). The leader will be nominating members to the shadow board at the same meeting on 17 April.

The government have already determined that the following must be members of local health and wellbeing boards – at least one councillor (as nominated by the leader), the director of adult social services, the director of children's services, the director of public health, a representative of the local HealthWatch organisation and a representative of each relevant NHS clinical commissioning group.

The cabinet decision is the conclusion of planning work that I have been leading in preparation for the establishment of the shadow board. Through the preparatory work, we discussed how to ensure those with a stake in the health and wellbeing outcomes for the borough can contribute to improving local health outcomes and tackling health inequalities. This work will be presented as part of the cabinet report on the 17 April. A presentation was also given to the health and adult social care scrutiny sub-committee on 14 March on the work being done to establish the shadow board. I welcome the input from the committee in helping us to take this work forward, including how to ensure that there is the widest possible engagement and involvement on the key health and wellbeing challenges in Southwark.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

Will the cabinet member for health and adult social care please provide an update on the future of the Fred Francis Day Centre?

RESPONSE

Fred Francis Day Centre remains open and is an important resource for older people in the borough and their carers. The centre will continue to prioritise work with older people who have complex care needs in relation to physical frailty and/or dementia. We recently invested in a complete refurbishment of the Fred Francis Day Centre in order to improve the physical environment and ensure that the centre was more welcoming.

However, our longer term vision is to develop a single centre of excellence within a more central location in Southwark. This centre would offer a day opportunities resource base for older people with complex care needs. The centre would primarily focus on the needs of people with dementia and their carers, a growing population in the borough, and would offer personalised day opportunities. We are exploring the possibility of such a centre and we would want to work in partnership with service users and their carers, the voluntary sector, the Southwark Business Support Unit (Health) and SLAM in developing such a centre. The development of a centre of excellence on one site with all the latest technology and thinking in respect of dementia care would enable us to significantly expand our offer to older people and would provide the opportunity to consider a seven day service with extended opening hours reaching more people than those currently using our existing two day centres.

The council is committed to working openly and transparently with older people, their carers and representatives as well as our local voluntary sector and NHS partners on the future direction of the in house centres, so that any future service model provides more personalised and integrated day opportunities and carer respite that compliment the councils strategic vision for adult social care and responds to the anticipated growth in our older population. Overall we want to provide more choice and control for older people and their carers.

29. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

Will the cabinet member for health and adult social care please provide an update on the future of the Southwark Park Day Centre?

RESPONSE

Southwark Park Day Centre remains open is an important resource for older people in the borough and their carers. The centre will continue to prioritise work with older people who have complex care needs in relation to physical frailty and/or dementia.

As I said in my answer to question 29, we are however working towards our longer term vision of providing a single centre for excellence which would offer valuable day opportunities for older people with complex care needs.

30. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL BUKOLA

What does the cabinet member believe the extent and impact of depression on black and minority ethnic (BME) older people will be in the borough if cuts to mental health services are implemented preventing accessibility to crucial social care provision?

RESPONSE

No decision has been made in relation to our older adult day centres which have a significant proportion of users with long term mental health needs.

However, to manage the significant reduction in funding from central government for mental health day centres, there will be a £400,000 (27%) reduction in council funding, we will not however be abandoning those with mental health difficulties. These centres are mostly used by younger people and only 7% of users are over 65.

Every existing user of these day centres will be reviewed under fair access to care (FACs) guidance to determine their eligibility for ongoing support from the council via personal budgets. Additionally every user will have a staying well plan completed (regardless of eligibility) to identify services that can be purchased as well as universal and free of charge services to help support their independence.

We are however looking to introduce a new service model for day support for people with long term mental health issues that has a strong focus on improving mental health through reablement and social support networks. We will be working with existing service users to develop this new model. We recognise that there will be some people who are not eligible to receive state funded care and support and therefore will no longer have access to council funded services, so they will be signposted to universal or free of charge services to ensure that they are not left without support or feeling isolated.

The council is committed to working openly and transparently with older people, their carers and representatives as well as our local voluntary sector and NHS partners on the future direction of the in house centres, so that any future service model provides personalised and effective day opportunities and respite that compliment the councils strategic vision for the future of health and will respond to the anticipated growth in our older population.

31. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

Please can the cabinet member tell me the current position for the future of each centre for: older people; people with learning and physical difficulties; and people with mental health problems?

RESPONSE

Mental health

The council and Southwark PCT business unit currently fund the following six day centres to support adults with long term mental health issues:

- Crossways Day Centre
- Open Door Day Centre
- Lorrimore Day Centre
- Blackfriars Settlement MH and Wellbeing Project
- Castle Resource Centre
- Maroons Day Centre (council run service).

These centres and services for adults with long term mental health needs in Southwark have not been reviewed for over 10 years. In that time, there have been significant national changes to the way councils support their residents, including the introduction of personal budgets. Over the summer, we asked the National Development Team for inclusion (NDTi) to review the six day centres we currently fund.

The review found that the services are generally valued by their members, but often duplicate services and haven't adapted to the more effective ways of supporting people that have been introduced across the country. They suggested a new model for services that is more person centered focusing on supporting members into independence and not limiting options to mental health specific services. The council supports the findings of this report and will be working with the staff, members and providers of these day centres and other key stakeholders to agree a new service model to support people with long term mental health issues in the community.

Physical disabilities

The recently opened Southwark Resource Centre, built in phase 1a of the regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate, is not just a replacement for the Aylsebury Day Centre for adults with physical disability and sensory impairment, but the base for a range of new services and activities. The independent living team offers building based respite and long term support for individuals and groups with eligible social care needs, as well as facilitating individuals and groups to overcome barriers to accessing their local community. The independent living team helps people to devise their own independent living plan, and assists them to achieve their stated outcomes, which might include independent travel, going to the gym, pool or joining a sporting activity, undertaking adult education, getting a job, building a social network or friendships and the centre also has its own user led group.

There are two day centres operating in Southwark for adults with learning disabilities; the Riverside and Queens Road Day centre, provided by The Camden Society. The council agreed a vision for adult social care services that sets out our aspiration to give people who use social care services more choice and control over their own support. This means we are encouraging and supporting more people to plan their own support and manage their own personal budgets rather than the council organising all the services people receive. The council seeks to develop a broader range of community services that will enable individuals to do this. From April we will be conducting a 3 month consultation on our vision for day and community services for people with learning disabilities that prioritises support for people in the following areas:

- Employment
- Education
- Community and friendships
- Sport and leisure.

There are no plans to close either of the day centres. A plan of reviews commences in April, and as people transition to having personal budgets, they may choose to purchase a wider range of support, and this means in future we are likely to see less reliance on day centres and people having more individualised, person centred support. The council will be working with providers, service users,

and families to develop the vision for day opportunities, and expand the range of community supports and resources available to people, and helping them to use personal budgets to achieve their outcomes.

Older People

The council currently runs two day centres for older people

- Fred Francis
- Southwark Park Road

The council is taking a strategic approach to all forms of day opportunities for older people within the context of its need to manage within a significantly reduced budget.

Our voluntary sector day services are continuing to work with older people who are physically frail and have capacity to make informed choices as to how they spend their personal budgets, providing a wider range of options for many older people if they wish to make use of these kinds of services

Our in house centers provide services for older people who have assessed eligible support needs under the fare access to care criteria. Both projects are working with those older people who have the most complex needs, especially dementia.

We are committed to ensuring that the council provide a centre of excellence to this group of our older population and their carers, which will have a key role to play in delivering the council's strategic vision for the future of adult social care, as approved by the cabinet in April 2011. For example:

- shifting the balance of care away from residential care to supporting older people to remain in the community
- provide person centered support and not "one size fits all"
- modernising our approach to day opportunities for everyone accessing services, thinking more about supporting people to participate in their local communities
- recognising the importance of the role of carers and understanding how targeted and timely support and information for carers can better support them.

32. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK

Please can the cabinet member for health and adult social care tell me what adult education is available for pensioners at reasonable costs in our borough?

RESPONSE

Where courses have a fee, learners aged 60 and over who are in receipt of a means-tested benefit including pension credit or council tax benefit are eligible for concessionary rates.

These are delivered from our main centre in Peckham and across the borough with a number of voluntary and community sector organisations.

Courses are delivered in a range of curriculum areas including art, ceramics, woodwork and upholstery, fashion and textiles, basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics, and English), local history, gardening, health and fitness and intergenerational family learning that includes grandparents and their grandchildren.

In addition there are some programmes specifically aimed at older learners, particularly in the health and fitness programme, including Keep Fit 50+, dance fitness and chair-based exercise classes.

33. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DARREN MERRILL

How important will the new Southwark resource centre be in helping disabled residents to live healthy, independent lives?

RESPONSE

I was extremely pleased to celebrate and be part of the opening of the new centre for independent living. This £3.6 million project demonstrates the council's commitment to older and disabled residents and the centre is one of the first developments on the new Aylesbury Estate which has been designed to promote independent living and shape disabled peoples' needs whilst ensuring that they can access the services they need.

The centre is fitted with a range of facilities including an arts and crafts studio, exercise floor and dance studio, an independent living skills kitchen and an IT suite that will enhance peoples' existing talents and help them fulfil their ambitions. Staff will work in partnership with voluntary, statutory and business sectors to make the facility a hub for supporting disabled people across Southwark to reach their full potential.

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

The government's new "affordable rent" model proposes charging rents for affordable homes of up to 80% of market rents. Can the cabinet member outline by postcode what rents for affordable housing in Southwark will increase to should the government's plans go ahead unamended?

RESPONSE

In order to fund the massive cuts to government funding for new affordable housing the government has redefined affordable housing to include a new "affordable rent" product with rents of up to 80% of the market rent. These rental levels could apply not only to new homes but also to relets of existing housing association properties. We do not believe homes at this level of rent will meet the need for affordable housing in Southwark, the rents are far too high, so both myself and the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing management have taken and will continue to take every opportunity to oppose these government changes. We will also continue to negotiate with developers and housing associations to try to limit the rent levels as much as possible.

The table below sets out the average market rents by postcode across Southwark, and then shows the level of rents at 80% and 65% of market rent, as at April 2011. For comparison, the table includes average target rents and service charges which are only available boroughwide. All charges shown are per week.

Area	Market rent £ (average across all units sizes as at April 2011)	80% market rent £	65% market rent £	Target rent for social landlords (across Southwark) 2011/12	Estimate for service charge (based on Core data for housing association lettings in the first 6 months of 2011/12)	Total estimate for target rent + service charge 2011/12
Southwark	415	332	270	95.63	12.38	108.01
SE1	486	388	316			
SE5	342	274	222			
SE11	450	360	292			
SE15	310	248	201			
SE16	426	341	277			
SE17	389	311	253			
SE21	376	301	244			
SE22	331	265	215			
SE24	389	312	253			

Source for Southwark target rent: Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)

The local housing allowance caps the amount of housing benefit that claimants in private rented housing can claim. The current local housing allowance (LHA) levels for Southwark are:

	£
1 bed	184.62
2 bed	235.38
3 bed	300.00
4 bed	380.77

The LHA does not currently apply to tenants in social housing, either council or housing association. However, the guidance issued by the homes and communities agency for the affordable homes programme advised that rents should not exceed LHA levels. Therefore, it is very unlikely that any housing association will seek to levy a rent in excess of LHA levels.

The average target rent levels shown are lower than would be expected on a new build scheme as the majority of the homes within the borough included in the overall number are existing council homes.

35. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR ALTHEA SMITH

What is the council doing to engage with and provide support to local shops in Southwark at this time of economic hardship?

RESPONSE

The council continues with a wide range of investment and support activity to mitigate the effects of the recession and to boost trade and footfall.

Investing in local retail environments (ILRE) is a five year, £4.5m project aimed at improving the physical environment of some of Southwark's local retail parades. Funding has been allocated to projects that deliver upgraded shop fronts, enhanced lighting, improved paving, better street furniture, clearer signage and more effective CCTV coverage.

The project has been designed to ensure that the local retail businesses identified decide what the most appropriate solutions to improving the shopping experience for their customers. With the added provision of business planning advice from our business advisory service, this aims to help ensure the long term survival of these vital local shops and sustain the communities that they serve.

Three sites within each community council area were then selected for ILRE investment, giving a total of 24 sites in the programme.

To date 13 parades have been completed or are near completion, including The Blue, Long Lane, New Kent Road, Albion Street while others such as Southampton Way, Jamaica Road and the Brandon Estate are about to start.

We have also pursued every recent opportunity to bid for regional funds to improve our town centres, with notable successes, namely the (London) Mayor's Regeneration Fund, which will fund capital improvements worth up to £10 million in Rye Lane and around Peckham Rye station, transforming the trading environment and stimulating new demand. Our successful bid to the Outer London Fund for Nunhead will bring shop front improvements and other investment in the likes of better lighting for shops along Nunhead Lane and Evelina Road.

On top of the recession, the August riots were an additional setback for those businesses on the receiving end of vandalism and looting, as well as lost trade in the days following. Therefore in addition to the emergency small business relief fund that was immediately set up to make cash available for securing premises, emergency re-stocking and a lifeline for continued trade, the council brought in additional government investment through the High Street Support Scheme, and was therefore able to fund the pre-Christmas "Love to Shop – Southwark" campaign, working with businesses in Walworth, Camberwell, Peckham and Bermondsey to ensure particular local angles on the campaign (bags for life, gift wrapping entertainment to attract customers etc). Free weekend parking at our four car parks was also brought in for the whole of December in support of the campaign.

Since September, the Lewisham & Southwark business advisory services has been up and running, delivered on behalf of both boroughs by GLE One London until March 2013. In addition to support for entrepreneurs with start up ideas, there is an extensive support service which is of particular value for existing businesses that need help with issues such as business planning, rates & leases, developing new markets and more.

The £1 million community restoration fund will also support local shops in Southwark by delivering long term improvements to high streets and town centres in Southwark, particularly in those areas most affected by the disturbances in August 2011.

Other small scale successes

Meanwhile, we have achieved the first success with using S106 to provide affordable business units. The unit secured through S106 at the Strata tower in Elephant and Castle is about to be let to a local Latin American business that has been operating out of E&C shopping centre since 1997. Hopefully the start of many more.

The Creation Trust pop-up shop 'Spark' opened its doors this month at 57-59 East Street. It has been designed, planned and will be run by fifteen young Southwark people who are gaining experience of all aspects of the retail business. Funded by the Youth Fund it will be open six days a week (closed Wednesdays) until the end of the month. It's stocking locally designed clothing, jewellery and gifts and bringing an empty high street unit back into excellent use. Go and shop!

36. WITHDRAWN

37. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN HAYES

How many families with children in Southwark will see their housing benefit cut as a result of the government's Welfare Reform Bill?

RESPONSE

Assessing the impacts of the welfare reform bill is a complex task since not all the changes will be introduced at the same time, some families will be entitled to transitional protection or receive discretionary support and not all elements of the bill are yet law. Any consideration of the impact of these cuts is based on the current housing benefit caseload and is therefore assuming that there is no change in the number of households currently claiming housing benefit between now and the time when the additional welfare benefit changes are introduced in 2013.

Southwark households will however be disproportionately affected by the changes due to the higher living costs associated with being an inner London borough and these households also finding that their accommodation becomes unaffordable.

The three main changes from the welfare reform proposals which will impact on families living in Southwark are:

- Reduction of local housing allowance (LHA) rates as from April 2011;
- Cuts to housing benefit for under occupying social housing tenants of working age from 2013; and,
- Introduction of a cap of £26,000 on the total benefits any one household may claim from 2013.

Of greatest impact is the reduction in the LHA will result in a number of households seeing a drop in their housing benefit each month. Between January and September 2012 there are 882 households who will experience a reduction in

housing benefit, and of those 372 are households who are also in receipt of child benefit and have therefore been identified as families.

The table below indicates the level of reduction experienced by these 372 families.

LHA reduction grouping	Total	%
<5£/week	57	15.3
£5-10/week	146	39.2
£10-15/week	142	38.2
£15-20/week	6	1.6
£20-25/week	2	0.5
>£30/week	19	5.1
Grand Total	372	100.0

Please note figures for October – December 2012 TBC

38. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

Does the cabinet member believe that section 106 for affordable housing should always be spent on new homes, or does she think that in some case it is appropriate to spend the money to top up the council's housing investment programme on its existing stock?

RESPONSE

As we stated in 2010 in cases where an in lieu payment, rather than on or off site provision or affordable housing is agreed for a development, we would like to be able to use this contribution both for building new affordable homes and refurbishing existing affordable housing. This approach could help finance funding gaps such as those we have on Four Squares and Abbeyfield and reduce the need to sell existing council homes to fund improvement works. However, until yesterday this approach was not permitted by national or regional planning policy.

The government have been consulting on their National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is set to change the position for the use of pooled contributions. This would allow commuted sums to be used to refurbish existing housing stock as well as deliver new affordable housing. In our response to the consultation, we were in strong support of this more flexible approach. However, the Mayor of London was opposing this approach and proposed changes to the London Plan to rule it out. I am pleased that the NPPF as agreed yesterday includes this wording, though it would only affect new developments and therefore new contributions. This flexible approach would not change the remit of expenditure for existing agreements, only new agreements, as the individual agreements specify the policy at the time they were signed and preclude using the funds for existing units.

Section 106 payments are not however the only means to ensure that we are proactive in the delivery of affordable housing. We also bring forward our own land for development, work closely with registered providers and developers to deliver new affordable homes, develop our own schemes through the council's build programme. What remains of importance however is for affordable housing

payments to be used to deliver as many homes as would have been built on the site that is developed.

39. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Please can the cabinet member for regeneration and corporate strategy provide an update on the relocation of the Christian Community of London Church at the Elephant and Castle?

RESPONSE

The Christian Community of London Church currently holds a block booking at the leisure centre, rather than a formal lease.

The council has recently been reviewing the council's property portfolio and subsequently, the team met with the church last week to discuss their requirements. Unfortunately, at this time, the council does not own anything suitable as a direct replacement, but we have suggested a couple of smaller properties which the church is now reviewing.

The council have also suggested a few non-council owned properties that may be suitable, but it will be the responsibility of the church to approach the responsible agents.

Should anything of a suitable nature come available in the future, it will certainly be brought to their attention.

40. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

The council recently received a report on options for the future of the Elephant and Castle Trust, which recommended that the trust should receive £30,000 per year of the rental income from a former community centre at 56 Southwark Bridge Road in the Bankside area of Cathedrals ward.

Can the cabinet member for regeneration and corporate strategy say whether she supports the recommendation, and if so:

1. Does she believe that it is appropriate to use rental income from a building in the north of Cathedrals ward, well beyond the Elephant and Castle area boundary, to fund a group that represents the Elephant and Castle when the council is no longer able to provide the £30,000 funding for the nearby Bankside Residents Forum?
2. Where does the money from the rental on 56 Southwark Bridge Road currently go to?

RESPONSE

The council has just undertaken a consultation exercise with regard to the future of the Elephant and Castle Trust and the recommendation to use rental income from 56 Southwark Bridge Road for a limited period to support the trust. It is evident from that exercise that there is little support for the trust. I therefore see little point

in continuing support for the trust and therefore do not support providing financial assistance to it.

I find it puzzling that there seems to be a perception that Cathedrals ward is not in the Elephant and Castle opportunity area; to clarify, it is. Perhaps the proposals for a new £20 million leisure centre in Cathedrals ward has gone un-noticed after the previous administration let the existing facility fall into disrepair and I am sure that after years of delay and indecision when the benefits from Elephant and Castle start being delivered Cathedrals ward residents will enjoy their fair share of those benefits.

With regard to a principle of providing a direct link between rent on a particular building and funding an organisation this is something which I generally do not support. Funding is funding irrespective of where it is generated from. 56 Southwark Bridge Road however is a special case with works for the project funded through the Elephant and Castle single regeneration budget. After the total mismanagement of the project which went massively over budget and programme under the last administration I felt it was only fair to hold public consultation on the independent report and its recommendations with regard to the trust and funding options.

As for funding local groups, if this is a local priority I can confirm that with the new revenue element of cleaner, greener, safer which this administration introduced the local community council can direct funds to this organisation.

The income from 56 Southwark Bridge Road under the deal agreed by the last administration is used to fund the costs of providing the community space in 56 Southwark Bridge Road. Any surplus is credited to the council and treated in the same manner as any other income.

41. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

In light of the new right to buy scheme which comes into effect on 2 April 2012, can he outline steps taken by officers in the housing department to fulfil their obligations in good time to make tenants aware of the opportunities available to them?

RESPONSE

The regulations governing how the new maximum discount rate is to be applied were received by officers on Monday 19 March 2012. Despite announcements the previous week that the new discount rate cap would rise to £75,000, action could not be taken until the regulations (2012/734) confirmed certain details. For example, that the new discount rate is to be applied to all live applications and current offer notices must be reissued to reflect the new purchase price (which in Southwark's case will be £59,000 less than that currently stated in most cases).

Councils' obligations to inform secure tenants about their right to buy are tempered by also informing them of the costs of ownership to ensure that unaffordable owner occupation is not promulgated. Secure tenants will not be penalised for making an application after 2 April 2012.

In appropriate timescales the website will be updated and articles can be contained in Southwark Housing News. The immediate priority is to contact all current

applicants with offer notices to explain the new rules and update their offer notices. Action is being taken to ensure this happens before the new regulations come into force.

42. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

In the light of the fact that that there are only a few days left for the responsive housing repairs contractor for the south area of the borough to demonstrate contractual compliance, would the cabinet member for housing management set out the timescale for progressing this matter and provide justification for any confidence he may have that the housing repairs service will be maintained to an effective standard in the event that the existing contract is terminated?

RESPONSE

The strategic director of housing is considering the future needs of this service and a decision will not be made until the end of March.

43. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MITCHELL

Is the cabinet member aware that there is a shortage of neighbourhood watch signs and that this has been exacerbated by the council failing to transfer such signs from redundant lamp posts to their replacements? With the Metropolitan Police denying they have resources or responsibility to assist in this, what steps are the council taking to ensure there are sufficient signs to support the demand in neighbourhood watch areas?

RESPONSE

The council will continue to support the Metropolitan Police in developing neighbourhood watch in Southwark. There were specific issues related to the removal of neighbourhood watch signs in the Ildersly Grove area of West Dulwich that were removed as part of the improvement to lighting columns. These signs have already been replaced. In terms of the future funding of neighbourhood watch signage, funding was previously obtained from the Metropolitan Police Service through their central resources. Unfortunately this funding has been withdrawn. The council will continue to lobby the Metropolitan Police to ensure that the necessary resources are provided to support the demand for signage in neighbourhood watch areas.