

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY 2013
MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN EDWARDS

Did Simon Hughes vote for the third reading of the government's Growth and Infrastructure Bill? Did he support any amendments to that bill?

RESPONSE

Yes he did. Despite claiming to support more affordable housing on new developments, Simon Hughes has just voted through a bill that will allow developers to immediately appeal to the Secretary of State against Section 106 affordable housing requirements. This puts councils like Southwark in a much weaker negotiating position and will mean that in the future it will be much easier for developers to wriggle out of their affordable housing requirements altogether.

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

What is the Leader's vision for the long-term future of the four council-run childrens' centres? Can he demonstrate how the views of parents have been included in this vision? Does he believe that parental involvement and engagement has been done well in the last year?

RESPONSE

Our vision for nursery and early year provision is to ensure that all four council run nurseries continue to offer an excellent service to parents and quality learning and care experience for children. We are obliged to ensure they are financially sustainable and better targeted to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families in the borough; those for whom this provision is intended. This is despite severe financial pressure and the reduction in funding from the government, including a further cut of over £6 million to the early intervention grant announced in December 2012.

I know that the cabinet member for children's services has visited the nurseries on at least five occasions since taking over this portfolio on 29 May 2012 and spoken to parents, carers and staff members. Labour councillors also voted to amend the agenda of our council assembly meeting on 4 July 2012 to hear a deputation of parents from the affected nurseries and to hold a debate on nurseries before we came on to the pre-advertised themed debate of older people.

The views of parents, through consultation, discussions and visits to the centres, were considered, resulting in the council's decision to keep the centres open. Parents' written suggestions to the council included increasing fees, reducing backroom and administrative expenses, reviewing staffing levels and looking at modernising payment methods, which have all been factored into establishing a sustainable financial model, fit for the future. Engagement with parents at all

nurseries has been undertaken by officers and cabinet colleagues, in writing and through visits as would be expected. The centre managers have been engaged in the consultation and planning for a staffing model. Staff have been consulted, their views factored into proposals. There have been numerous email communications between parents and the council as well, and the council can guarantee that all suggestions, issues and ideas have been taken seriously, discussed at length and where possible, included in planning for the future.

Apart from the fact that the council listened to parents and decided to keep the centres open, albeit with significant financial reductions in budget, we have also listened to the parents' view of securing a high quality service, a vision shared by all of us.

I am confident that parental engagement and involvement has been as extensive as possible, particularly when needing to adhere to human resources requirements in relation to terms and conditions of staff and employees. The outcome of this issue, i.e. that the centres will remain open, high quality services will be maintained and the financial model is more sustainable for the future, demonstrates that the council listened and responded to parents.

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NICK DOLEZAL

The first clause of the government's Growth and Infrastructure Bill gives unprecedented powers to the Secretary of State to strip any local authority deemed to be 'failing' of its planning powers. This would enable developers in these areas to ask to have their applications decided by the Secretary of State without ever being reviewed by the local authority. The Secretary of State's decision would be final with no right of appeal. What does he believe the impact of this proposal will be and has the council made any representations to the government?

RESPONSE

I think this proposal, as with much of the rest of the bill, will create a confused and highly centralised planning process; ultimately resulting in planning decisions that do not reflect the wishes of local people. It is also indicative of this government's misguided belief that the housing crisis in this country is the result of a cumbersome planning process and fastidious councils. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Last year Southwark approved nearly nine out of 10 (87%) of all planning applications for major developments – in line with the national average. This indicates that the planning system is not the root cause of the housing crisis but rather the government's decision to slash the budget for social housing by 60%.

I wholeheartedly believe that Southwark is a leading example of how planners and local political leadership have seized the opportunity to not just enable development, but take forward-thinking, proactive steps to ensure delivery of development and particularly housing. Southwark has led the way in revisiting and amending legal agreements on stalled schemes where there is a clear link to delivery and not merely a 'technical implementation' to protect a consent. We have in place clear and reasonable review mechanisms on the viability of schemes to secure additional affordable housing on large-scale, phased development. We offer a first-class pre-application service to provide clarity and certainty with regard to the acceptability of proposals. We have consistently improved our planning

performance in the face of vanishing resources, a fuzzy, nebulous national policy framework, and the inertia of the financial markets.

It is ironic that two parties which claim to support localism, the Tories and Liberal Democrats, are so keen to strip power away from local government and put it all in the hands of Eric Pickles.

The council submitted a response to the consultation on 17 January 2013.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Can the leader give an update on the major works at Draper House following the recent gas leak and when these works are now likely to be completed? What action is being taken to ensure that contractors on other sites adhere to the highest standards of health and safety?

RESPONSE

The contract with Breyer, the contractor carrying out the major works at Draper House, has been suspended at Draper House following a serious health and safety incident. A material breach of contract notice has been served on Breyer who have provided a response to the council. Further contractual and legal discussions are taking place with Breyer regarding their response. The intention is to complete legal agreements by 25 January 2013 with a view to restarting works by the end of January. This will delay the original completion date of May 2013 by an estimated two months.

Residents have been kept fully informed with two public meetings arranged by council officers and letters. A further meeting will be called once discussions are complete. Checks have been done to other properties where works were carried out by Breyer to ensure that no other resident is at risk.

All contractors are required to provide comprehensive health and safety method statements prior to works starting on-site to ensure that they fully comply with statutory health and safety working practices with regular on-site health and safety and quality checks carried out by the council's project team.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NEIL COYLE

60% of the people affected by the government's latest cuts to welfare are in work. What impact will cuts to working age benefits and tax credits have on the incomes of families in Southwark?

RESPONSE

For all their talk of scroungers and benefit cheats, the Tories and Liberal Democrats are cutting the most support - tax credits, maternity allowance, maternity pay, sick pay, and housing benefit - from working people.

I know that people in Southwark are already having their incomes squeezed by this Government. My real concern is that these latest cuts will have the perverse effect of removing the incentive to work from the lowest paid – the people who do the essential jobs in our borough – pushing more people into poverty and increasing unemployment.

Indeed the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates there are already 6.1 million people in working households who are in poverty. According to Institute of Fiscal Studies calculations the impact of the changes announced in the autumn statement between now and April 2015 will be to reduce the real income of a one-earner working family by £534 on average in 2015-16.

It also underlines how two of Southwark Labour's key policies are making a difference: free, healthy school meals - which is not just tackling childhood obesity but supporting families with the cost of living - and introducing the London Living Wage for all our staff. It demonstrates the real difference between a Labour vote and a Tory Liberal Democrat one.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES

What does the leader believe is a reasonable time for his cabinet members to take in responding to letters?

RESPONSE

I would encourage all cabinet members to respond to correspondence as quickly as possible.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR VICTORIA MILLS

What will the two year local government financial settlement from government announced on 20 December mean for Southwark?

RESPONSE

Essentially it will mean more pain. We face more funding cuts in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The cuts are particularly bad in 2014-15 with the council facing a loss of £24.53 million or 9.7% in our revenue spending power through cuts from our government grant, a real terms reduction of £32.38 million - larger even than in 2010.

There are three specific points I would note:

- The fact that the government's autumn statement was made in December and we did not discover our settlement until five days before Christmas demonstrates that we were right to prepare a three year indicative budget back in 2010. We were right to plan prudently and maintain reserves and contingencies in the face of opposition from the Liberal Democrats who, each financial year, call for us to spend everything. It means that despite all the pain that we have been through, Southwark residents and the services they rely on will not fall victim to this government's reckless mismanagement of the economy and its failed austerity programme.
- Most unsettling from this year's settlement is the £6.1 million (29%) cut to the early intervention grant (EIG). EIG funds core, high priority children's services including children's centres; provision of support to get young people in education, employment and training; early intervention services; statutory specialist services and voluntary sector commissioning. Part of the EIG reduction is to pay for the government's offer of nursery places for two year olds. There is no "new" money to fund this. That is money the Tory and Liberal Democrat government has taken from Southwark children centres,

Southwark early intervention services and Southwark schemes to help young people in education.

- Finally it will mean more difficult spending decisions in the future. I have always said these are not our cuts; they have been forced on us by the Conservative Liberal Democrat Government which is still wedded to a failed economic theory. They have chosen to cut more from the most deprived areas. Southwark, for example, is the 11th hardest hit council in the country, losing £249.28 between 2010 and 2014-15 for every man, woman and child living in the borough. The equivalent figure for Epsom and Ewell is £15.18. But now that we are faced with this challenge we will continue to deliver our manifesto commitments, protect our most vulnerable residents, deliver value for money and create a fairer future for all in Southwark.

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROSIE SHIMELL

What minimum standards do schools need to reach to be considered for temporary or permanent expansions? Does he believe schools that have been rated poorly by Ofsted should still be considered for expansion?

RESPONSE

After failing to take action when they ran the council, I welcome that the Southwark Liberal Democrats now recognise the urgent and pressing need for more primary school places. It is a shame that Liberal Democrats are not talking to their colleagues in government and asking them to protect funding for Southwark schools so that we can actually see new primary schools in the borough.

School standards are very important when considering which schools should provide temporary or permanent expansions and this is taken into consideration alongside population trends and available space to expand. The school improvement team supports and challenges schools to ensure that they are providing places of a suitable quality and that their overall quality of leadership, teaching and learning is good or better.

I do not believe schools that have been rated poorly by Ofsted should be considered for expansion and I am pleased to say that none of the schools identified for expansion in our primary investment programme are rated as inadequate by Ofsted.

Of the ten primary schools providing the additional forms of entry three are outstanding (Albion, Charles Dickens and John Donne), five are good (Bessemer Grange, Dog Kennel Hill, Grange, Ivydale and Langbourne) and two are satisfactory (Camelot and Crawford). Both of the schools that are satisfactory will serve different parts of the borough. Crawford has recently been judged as one of the most improved primary schools in London and we are confident will be judged good at its next inspection. Camelot is constantly monitored by the school improvement team and improvement plans to take it to a judgment of 'good' are in place. Already there are improvements being seen as an increased focus on the quality of teaching has been a priority. The quality of teaching is improving as is the progress of the pupils.

9. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR TIM MCNALLY

How many empty homes are there in Southwark? How much has the council paid to secure empty homes in each of the last three years? How many council officers are employed to deal with bringing empty homes back into use?

RESPONSE

The latest council tax base figures as at November 2012 shows that there are 2,645 empty homes across all tenures.

Empty homes on the regeneration sites at Aylesbury and Heygate estate have cost £659,000 in 2010-11, £706,000 in 2011-12 and £750,000 in 2012-13 (actual forecast to date). The figures include security patrols as well as welding up costs.

The costs are as a result of keeping properties secure from both long and short term squatting, minimising access points onto and off the estate, security measures for remaining estate residents (one leaseholder now remaining on the Heygate), preventing trespass, areas being used for rough sleeping and reducing crime hot spots generally.

On minor voids, the council has significantly reduced costs and its reliance on using grilles as a means to secure empty properties with only one grille used in 2011 on a property that had been damaged; rather relying on the speed of turnaround to ensure these vacant properties are quickly occupied.

The empty homes team consists of two officers who work with private sector empty property owners to find ways to bring their properties back into use as housing. In 2012-13 there were 21 staff employed to bring empty council homes back into use.

10. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL BUKOLA

How many disrepair cases is the council facing with tenants and leaseholders? Would the cabinet member support Liberal Democrat calls for a system of caretakers to be returned to estates to deal with tenant-leaseholder issues and help avoid cases of disrepair?

RESPONSE

At the end of December 2012 there were 186 disrepair cases down from 307 in April 2011. This is down from 386 in 2010 and 377 in 2009 when the Liberal Democrats ran the council. This is the lowest level of disrepair cases for some considerable time.

Councillor Bukola may be interested to know that the council moved away from employing caretakers about 20 years ago. Estate compliance officers (ECOs) were introduced who took ownership for communal areas, repairs (including disrepair) and monitoring of cleaning and grounds maintenance. The previous Liberal Democrat administration scrapped ECOs when they ran the council in 2005-6 which I assume Councillor Bukola, were he on the council, would have opposed.

It is not currently proposed to introduce caretakers. Instead two alternative proposals are planned. The first is to introduce communal repairs compliance officers who will lead on estate inspections, section 20 consultation, contract

management, pre and post inspections, ordering, training and resident and member interaction. The second is to introduce an annual property check. The annual property check involves combining the tenancy check, gas servicing visit (where it applies) and a property inspection into a single annual visit. The principle is to take a proactive approach to identifying repairs early and tenancy compliance.

Both these initiatives will have a positive effect on disrepair and represent significant service improvements for our residents.

11. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Following workers being unable to complete resurfacing in Grove Park, Camberwell, due to an expired works permit earlier this month, what was the total cost of this error to the council? Was the specialised tarmac for this work reused and if so at what site?

RESPONSE

The abortive costs to the council total are £6,650. The materials were used by our contractor at a site in the London Borough of Lambeth, where they also hold a contract. Lambeth would thus have paid the contractor for the material ensuring Southwark made a corresponding saving.

12. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR NORMA GIBBES (CAMBERWELL COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Can the council please provide an update on the regeneration plans for Camberwell?

RESPONSE

We are committed to improving the quality of life for people in Southwark and will invest £11 million to help make Camberwell a place where people can be proud of. Five key projects will help to transform the area and we invite local people to have a say on the development of the proposed projects.

Consultation began on 21 January 2013. The five projects which are being consulted upon are:

- We want to build on the vibrant and distinctive nature of Camberwell. Through the supplementary planning document we will set out detailed planning guidance for the next 15 years on a number of policies, including the vision for Camberwell, design guidance for key development sites, public realm improvements and setting out the balance between housing, retail and employment uses in the area.
- We are keen to develop a lasting cohesiveness for the town centre and streetscape by improving the quality of streets and links with the town centre. Streetscape improvements will reduce pedestrian congestion and street clutter, enhance crossing opportunities, and aid the movement of buses through the town centre. Transport for London will also be delivering the cycle superhighway 5 through Camberwell, which should see cycle safety improvements at key junctions as well as improved space for cyclists.

- There will be an improved public space and reading facilities at the new Camberwell Library. We have already been engaging with local people about the new design for the building and landscape and this will continue to the planning application stage.
- An exciting redesign of Camberwell Green Park will reinforce the role of the green as a town centre public space, with a new play area and an improved seating offer.
- The pocket places initiative will support the wider streetscape improvements and bring together the large number of public spaces, roads and laneways throughout the town centre.

I welcome everyone to have a say through the stakeholder engagement programme starting with a drop in session on 26 January 2013 in the new Jubilee Hall at Camberwell Leisure Centre. I am also delighted that Councillor Gibbes has agreed to have the regeneration plans as a major item at the Camberwell community council meeting on 13 February 2013 where residents and local people can have a say on the proposed plans.

13. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR CLEO SOANES (PECKHAM AND NUNHEAD COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Please could Veolia Environmental Services improve the pedestrian access for residents at the new recycling waste facility in order for them to dispose/recycle small items made from wood and metals etc. Currently members of the public are prohibited from walking on the ramp which is for cars only?

RESPONSE

The current arrangements at the household waste reuse and recycling centre (HWRRC) for pedestrians and cyclists is that that they can drop items off in the reuse area to the left of the ramp, avoiding the need for residents on foot to be in close proximity to cars. Usually, there will be a member of staff on hand to accept the waste but on occasion, this isn't the case.

As a result, a commitment has been made by Veolia Environmental Services (whom are responsible for managing the site) to review the signage in the HWRRC to make it clearer where pedestrians should place their waste. I will ensure this is completed within the next three months.

This arrangement means the site is fully accessible to all residents whilst ensuring their safety.

14. QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON (DULWICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

In view of the concern in Dulwich about the effectiveness of the new arrangements for determining planning applications, would the chair of planning committee advise whether the current system will be reviewed, and whether consideration will be given to holding planning sub-committee meetings at the new council offices at Queens Road Peckham, or at other venues in the south of the borough?

RESPONSE

I am already in discussion with officers about how we can best undertake a review of the current planning regime.

15. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON (BOROUGH, BANKSIDE AND WALWORTH COMMUNITY COUNCIL)

Can the council consider developing a consistent process for all public consultation it carries out?

RESPONSE

On 11 December 2012 the cabinet agreed a future approach to community engagement. The approach acknowledged that there were examples of good practice in consultation and engagement across the council but that at times this was inconsistent.

The new approach sets out some key principles that will apply across the council in carrying out consultation and community engagement. These include:

- Being clear about the scope of our engagement: whether we are communicating, consulting, deciding together or acting together.
- Engaging when we know it will make a difference: when there is a real opportunity for people to have an impact and influence decisions on issues that local people care about.
- Engaging at the right time; at an early enough stage for there to be an opportunity to genuinely influence a policy or service.
- Allowing sufficient time for good quality engagement to take place.
- Being clear about what we are asking; what opportunities there are to shape services and be honest about what can and can't be achieved.
- Ensuring that our engagement is accessible and targeted to those it needs to reach using a variety of engagement methods to broaden participation and overcome any barriers people may have in engaging with us.
- Aiming to engage as widely as possible so that we increase engagement with those who are not already in touch with the council.
- Telling people what has happened as a result of their engagement.
- Building the capacity of the community to deliver services where they can do this better than us and being prepared to take risks and try out new ways of working. Where we can we will devolve responsibility and power to the community to deliver.

The approach is a starting point and as part of the ongoing work that the council is doing officers are producing and implementing an action plan for better coordination of community engagement and consultation activity across the

council. This will include developing tools and resources to support officers engaged in consultation to ensure it meets the principles of the approach and is more consistent and coordinated.

Community councils play a central role in community engagement in Southwark. Sometimes consultations at community councils are very effective, sometimes not. This is something we have discussed in community council chairs and vice-chairs meetings. Officers are therefore producing a forward plan of consultations for community councils so that they have more opportunity to plan their agendas effectively in advance and achieve a higher quality of engagement in the actual meetings.

16. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR MICHAEL SITU

How will Labour's community restoration fund benefit businesses in Rotherhithe?

RESPONSE

We launched the community restoration fund (CRF), not only as a response to 2011 riots but because small and medium-sized businesses in Southwark were struggling thanks to a triple whammy of the double-dip recession, the rise of large out-of-town shopping centres and internet shopping.

Albion Street in Rotherhithe is an excellent example of a place with a fantastic history of economic and commercial activity which is popular with local people and has the right ingredients for success but just needs a small boost. That is why the CRF is providing support to businesses in Rotherhithe. Funding provided through the CRF has allowed Albion Street Traders to deliver a campaign to put this local parade of shops on the "shopping map" of Rotherhithe. This has included running an advertising campaign in Southwark News in October and November 2012, supported by the council's communications team, promoting the street and the Scandinavian market. Traders are also working to promote local art works and are planning an Easter market for the street to increase interest in the local area and attract new customers.

17. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR KEVIN AHERN

In the absence of government action, what can the council do to increase employment in Southwark?

RESPONSE

I have been shocked by the revelations last week that George Osborne's claim that employment was at a record high – a claim endorsed by Bermondsey and Old Southwark MP Simon Hughes – is down to the government fiddling the figures. Of the 500,000 additional jobs created in the past year one in five of the people involved are on government work schemes, including unpaid workers doing voluntary and mandatory work experience in supermarkets and charity shops and many more with no jobs, training or pay, who simply attend regular job hunt workshops. It is clear that the government is fiddling the figures to hide their economic failure.

What is more, long-term unemployment is rising, as is long-term youth unemployment. Over a third of the unemployed have been out of work for over a year.

These are precisely the people the government's flagship work programme was supposed to help but its results have been worse than doing nothing with just two in 100 jobseekers helped into sustained employment

We, as a council, therefore need to do what we can to create jobs and help local people access them here and in the rest of London. Previously we had a great deal more funding to do this through, for example, the working neighbourhoods fund. Cuts to this funding require us to take a different approach. We therefore launched a new economic wellbeing strategy for Southwark in November. This strategy sets out the council's ambitions for economic development and employment up to 2020. A key part of this strategy is closing the gap between Southwark's employment rate and that of London as a whole by ensuring that we are making the most of Southwark's comparative advantages to create jobs and support Southwark residents into work, enabling people to stay in jobs and progress beyond entry level low-paid work. For example, we will:

- Make the most of opportunities brought by development - for example at the Shard and at Elephant and Castle - by maximising jobs and training opportunities during construction and in the completed developments
- Broker better conversations and foster relationships between employers and academies, schools and colleges about how to get young people ready for work
- Ensure better co-ordination of the many different efforts to help young people into work, increasing engagement with employers and skills providers and promoting a better understanding of how study and training leads to jobs.

The government's failure to get to grips with youth unemployment is exactly why we have introduced our £3 million youth fund, part of which is going towards provision of employment support and advice for 1,500 young people in Southwark aged 16-24. In addition, we are already investing in a range of projects delivered by local organisations this year to provide employment support, including training, employability skills, mentoring, work placements and help to find and keep a job, and keeping this provision under review so we can respond to changing markets for jobs and employment support.

We will be reviewing our employment support activities in light of our new strategy. With long-term employment becoming a growing problem in Southwark, we will be looking for ways to tackle this, particularly among young people

18. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR PATRICK DIAMOND

On 19 December 2012, Southwark was one of two local authorities praised by the New Local Government Network in The Guardian as having a good strategy when it comes to economic development. How is the council planning to build on its work in this in 2013?

RESPONSE

I want to congratulate everyone at the council who helped to develop Southwark's new economic wellbeing strategy. The piece in The Guardian identified economic development as an area where local government has not done enough or been innovative enough, but went on to single out Southwark as a local authority that does economic development "really well".

Our new strategy, which covers 2012-20, focuses on what we as a council can do to help local residents gain employment. This includes maximising the opportunities that come from being in central London – such as the borough's major regeneration schemes - to create local jobs by making Southwark an increasingly attractive place for business. It also captures our desire to promote thriving high streets and town centres and help local people achieve economic wellbeing at a time when the recession and changes to welfare are having an impact on their personal finances.

The strategy was adopted formally by cabinet on 20 November 2012 and work now begins on detailed implementation and consolidating of some of the early measures already put in place to deliver the strategic aims. This is all highly ambitious and the council cannot tackle these challenges alone. So in order to make the strategy work we will seek to build new and better partnerships with all relevant groups – government departments, businesses and voluntary organisations – that have a stake in Southwark's economic future. In particular, we need to forge a new and better relationship with business in Southwark.

Realising our ambitions will take more than individual initiatives – no matter how effective they are. All parts of the council will have to work together to deliver this strategy and enable our residents to access the skills and support they need to achieve economic wellbeing and ensure the borough is open and responsive to the needs of business.

19. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR DAN GARFIELD

Ongoing and meaningful community engagement is essential if the council is to remain responsive to the needs of local people. What is she doing to ensure the council maintains a positive and reciprocal dialogue with local residents?

RESPONSE

Good community engagement is already happening in every department of the council. However it currently happens more intuitively than by design, it exists in pockets or not at all, it is not always co-ordinated and could work more effectively across the council. On 11 December 2012 the cabinet agreed a future approach to community engagement aimed at further strengthening our approach to community engagement and ensuring a more consistent approach across the council.

The approach recognises that in a time of austerity we need to use our finance and other resources to support the voluntary and community sector and community involvement in the most effective way we can, linked to our overall vision of a fairer future for all. It is also more important than ever that all groups get to have their say in how our services are configured. As part of this, we need to ensure that the council is engaging with our residents in the most effective way possible. Bad engagement is worse than no engagement at all. But good engagement, where

we have a genuine dialogue with our residents, groups and businesses has huge benefits.

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a range of new responsibilities including the community right to challenge, lists of assets of community value, community right to bid and neighbourhood planning, which came into force during 2012. The council has put in place its processes for dealing with these and has led the way, being the first in the country to list an asset of community value and having two active neighbourhood forums working on neighbourhood plans for their areas.

In this context, it is important that the council clearly states to local residents and other stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector, its commitment to effective engagement and a fundamental shift in the relationship between the council and our communities. Supporting the various roles volunteers play in communities is central to this fundamental shift in relationships.

The housing commission engagement will be a concrete example of this approach. The proposals for engagement will include finding new ways of reaching more people and engaging them in a more open conversation where we decide together what we are going to do in the longer term. As well as providing information to inform the future of housing in Southwark, this process will be an opportunity to test the effectiveness of this approach.

20. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR NORMA GIBBES

What impact has the merging of community councils had on attendance at those meetings?

RESPONSE

Following the merger of community councils attendances have risen on the whole. In Borough, Bankside and Walworth pre-merger, in the April 2012 meetings the attendance figures were 48 and 33 respectively, totalling 81. Since the merger the highest number of attendees has been 107. In Peckham and Nunhead pre-merger, in the January 2012 meetings the attendance figures were 67 and 44 respectively, totalling 111. Since the merger the highest number has been 120 at the September 2012 Peckham and Nunhead community council. The attendance figures for the two unchanged areas, Camberwell community council and Dulwich community council, remain relatively stable.

The only area where attendance figures have not increased is in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. Pre-merger there was an average attendance of 61 and 64 respectively. Since the merger there have been two meetings where the numbers have been 85 and 92.

Chairs and vice-chairs of community councils regularly meet to share information and to discuss ways of improving attendance and the running of meetings.

The cabinet recently agreed 'future approach for community engagement' which looks at all aspects of our community engagement, including how we can continue to strengthen community councils and their links to the local community.

21. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL NOBLET

What is the council doing to ensure it complies with the Public Services (Social Value) Act which comes into force from January 2013 requiring public bodies to take social value and community benefits offered by contractors into consideration when awarding contracts?

RESPONSE

The council requires social value to be considered for all contracts which require a gateway one strategy report; that is all contracts over £75,000. The contracts team has prepared a detailed briefing note detailing the main provisions of the act and providing practical advice about how to include social value issues in the procurement process. The guidance explains that social value should be considered within the context of local needs and the particular strategic objectives of the council. The briefing note will be available on The Source; it is also proposed to hold specific training sessions for staff on the act.

While the legislation does not require the council to report on how it has included social value in its contracts, we will be looking at how to monitor progress.

In any case, the council already takes steps to ensure that local people and businesses have the opportunity to benefit from the services we procure as a council, which is very much in keeping with our economic wellbeing strategy. For example, cabinet discussions of such contracts frequently focus on the opportunities for local suppliers and for local people to access jobs or apprenticeships through these contracts. This goes beyond our own procurement and we are working closely with major developers to ensure that their supply chains and employment practices benefit local people and businesses.

22. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GETTLESON

Will the cabinet member support the introduction of protected shopping frontages for the length of Bermondsey Street so as to better protect existing class uses in the conservation area? Will she set out a process for this to be achieved in the near future?

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

Yes. It is important to preserve and protect the unique character of many of our shopping destinations. Myself and former Councillor Thorncroft lobbied for this protection for Nunhead's shops in the 2004 Southwark plan and this protection has saved many shops from being converted into residential properties.

From this experience I would highlight to Councillor Gettleson that the existing criteria for protecting shop frontages are 'a frontage of shops where there is a concentration of retail activity. These frontages comprise a cluster of 10 or more retail shops'. These criteria meant that a few shops in Nunhead could not be protected and if there are gaps in the parade on Bermondsey Street we may have a similar difficulty.

The protected shopping frontages for Southwark will be reviewed as part of the preparation of a new Southwark plan. The review of the current Southwark plan will begin in April with a timescale proposal being agreed as set out in the local development scheme. There will then be a number of informal and formal consultations, an examination in public and an inspector's binding report before the Southwark plan is adopted by council assembly. I will ask officers to ensure protection for Bermondsey Street's shops is considered as part of this process.

Another opportunity, perhaps one that could happen more quickly, is to protect the shops in a neighbourhood plan. A neighbourhood plan for Bermondsey has been under discussion for some time and we are consulting on proposed boundaries for a neighbourhood area. A policy to protect shopping frontages could be introduced in a neighbourhood plan. It is not for me to dictate the content of the neighbourhood plan, but I am happy to suggest it to the authors of the plan and suggest you do likewise.

23. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

What steps has the cabinet member taken to promote the principles and practice of Fairtrade to the businesses and the people of Southwark? What evidence is there that Southwark's status as a Fairtrade borough has been strengthened or improved under this administration? What action plan or other set of strategic objectives has been put in place to ensure that Southwark retains this hard won status for the future?

RESPONSE

Southwark achieved Fairtrade status in July 2007. This was a remarkable achievement – and we should recognise the leadership of my colleague Councillor Dixon-Fyle and the Fairtrade steering group who made this a reality. Southwark remains a Fairtrade borough, and while the council continues its commitment to supporting Fairtrade, I am pleased to note that other organisations in the borough, including London South Bank University and schools such as Charles Dickens Primary, are helping to support and promote Fairtrade. The borough is host to the seat of the Diocese of Southwark – London's first Fairtrade diocese – and also a very active local Catholic Agency for Overseas Development group. The Bread of Life Centre and cafe in Christ Church, East Dulwich, is a hub for community participation in Fairtrade activities, and recently celebrated its tenth anniversary.

We are reviewing our role in promoting Fairtrade in the borough.

24. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR LISA RAJAN

What are the criteria for an organisation to be added to the council's approved voluntary and community list? How often will this list be updated? Will organisations not on the list still be considered for local service delivery projects awarded by the council?

RESPONSE

A report that recommends the creation of an approved list of voluntary and community sector providers is being considered by the cabinet on 29 January 2013.

Establishing such a list is a groundbreaking initiative that has developed through partnership working between the council and the voluntary and community sector in Southwark. It is a key component in streamlining the council's commissioning processes which are particularly critical in the current difficult financial climate.

Officers have developed this project in response to repeated requests from the voluntary and community sector to streamline the process and reduce the burdens on the council and the sector. It demonstrates the council's commitment to a continued partnership approach with the sector.

The council will advertise that it is setting up an approved list and organisations will be able to apply online to be vetted for inclusion on a database. Organisations that meet the required standards will be included. Those not meeting the standards will be offered support by Community Action Southwark or directed to online self-help assessment tools.

The setting up of the list aims to save time and improve efficiency by eliminating the need for organisations to submit the standard information in response to multiple council procurement opportunities. It will also reduce the time the council spends in vetting information and the development of the database will improve the management of information.

The proposed criteria for an organisation to be added to the council's approved voluntary and community sector list are meeting the required levels in:

- Governance
- Finance
- Health and safety
- Equalities
- Experience
- Quality assurance
- Safeguarding
- Insurance.

Access to the list will be advertised annually for a one month period.

Organisations not on the list will still be able to respond to tender opportunities.

25. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR NICK STANTON

How much money has each school in Southwark received through the pupil premium? How many children are eligible for the pupil premium? How many council staff are employed to deal with processing pupil premium issues?

RESPONSE

In 2012-13, the deprivation pupil premium is £11.2 million for all Southwark schools, of which £7.3 million is for authority maintained schools. This £7.3 million equates to 4.8% of the total £152 million budget for those schools.

This needs to be weighed against the 5.1% real terms cut in the remainder of schools budgets since 2010-11. If instead of funding the pupil premium schools had just been funded fully for inflation each year, there would have been £456,000 more given to our maintained schools over all.

Full details of each school's deprivation pupil premium can be found from the following link:

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xlsx/p/pupil%20premium%202012-13%20school%20tables%20final.xlsx>

Members will also be aware of government cuts being made to council budgets to support children. In 2011-12, the creation of the early intervention grant saw a cut of £5 million in the funding originally given to the council for these purposes in 2010-11 to its current level of £20.5 million. Government proposes to cut this funding by a further 30% in 2013-14, by removing a further £6.1 million.

17,984 pupils in all Southwark schools are eligible for the deprivation pupil premium, of which 11,703 are in our maintained schools. This number is based on the number of children registered for statutory free school meals. The method of implementation of the council's free, healthy school meals pledge has encouraged greater registration for statutory free school meals, so I am sure Councillor Stanton will be pleased that our policy appears to be benefiting the finances of our borough's primary schools.

The deprivation pupil premium is calculated by the Department for Education and the council's finance team processes the payment which is a small element of one finance team member's role. The children looked after pupil premium is released on receipt of the looked after child's personal education plan; this administrative process is also a small part of one team member's role. The pupil premium has not therefore necessitated the employment of any additional council staff.

26. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR GRAHAM NEALE

Why has the number of alcohol confiscations dropped throughout the borough despite a significant rise in the number of ambulance call outs for binge drinking? What action has been taken to prevent street drinking in Southwark, and also specifically in South Bermondsey?

RESPONSE

During the period 2011-12 the community warden service confiscated alcohol on 719 occasions, primarily from street drinkers. The projected figure for confiscations for this financial year is 313. During the Olympics emphasis was placed on engaging with the street population and signposting them to social/alcohol treatment services, with confiscations forming a secondary part of those interventions. A total of 314 "on street interventions" were completed by council

officers, with street drinkers/beggars, and 27 incidents of public drunkenness responded to.

The power to confiscate alcohol from individuals drinking in a public place when behaving in an anti social manner is available to Southwark wardens and police officers (figures from the police are not currently available). The vast majority of seizures relate to individuals with entrenched, long term drinking issues who gather in groups during the day time in our public places.

Ambulance call outs for binge drinking and other health related issues are in the main related to the night time economy. This is reflected in the London Ambulance Service call out data. In the period 2011-12 the London Ambulance Service made 2,895 call-outs to Southwark. The projected figure for call-outs for 2012-13 is 3,261, an increase of 366 or 11%. The ward that sees the most ambulance call-outs is Cathedrals with 15% of the annual total for both years.

Southwark has a robust partnership approach to dealing with street drinking. Confiscations (under the designated public place orders) are one enforcement measure, we can also issue fixed penalty notices, acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) and anti-social behaviour orders, with 36 ABCs issued in this financial year to date). We can also utilise the Southwark CCTV system to track, record and provide evidence of street drinking and anti-social behaviour. In December 2012 alone, 19 arrests were made for public disorder/drunkenness as a direct result of CCTV recordings. Assessment and treatment options are also offered for those that want to make the journey to recovery. Partnership area action plans are developed and implemented where this issue is highlighted thorough the ward panels or community councils.

The same approach would be taken in South Bermondsey as with any other part of Southwark with treatment and enforcement interventions being used. I am aware of the particular problem of street drinkers congregating around a bench in The Blue which is causing problems for local residents and I have asked officers to investigate further.

Trading standards officers monitor compliance with regards to underage sales of alcohol and other age related products by carrying out targeted test purchasing operations with the help of young people who are under the age of 18. With regards to the ward of South Bermondsey there have been no test purchases of alcohol carried out since 2011 when three premises were tested all of which passed. Any allegations regarding underage sales are investigated by follow up inspections and/or test purchasing. We also work with our licensing colleagues to ensure businesses comply with mandatory licence conditions regarding the operation of age verification procedures.

The new Southwark alcohol strategy will reinforce this approach to robustly tackling alcohol related antisocial behaviour as well as other types of alcohol related harm.

27. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PODDY CLARK (TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING)

What is the council doing to control foxes in the borough, including discouraging people from feeding them and keeping them away from parks and wildlife? How many enquiries have been made to the council about controlling foxes?

RESPONSE

Foxes can be a nuisance in urban environments, however controlling urban foxes is very difficult, expensive, and not often successful, not to mention the fact that foxes are protected by law. Foxes are not and never have been classified as 'vermin', so local authorities have no legal obligation to act against them.

We would encourage residents and home owners to take some practical measures to reduce the likelihood of foxes having potential food sources and also to deter them from entering a property. This could include:

- Removing potential food sources
- Keeping rubbish in closed bins
- Not leaving bagged rubbish outside
- Removing piles of garden clippings
- Fill gaps under garden sheds
- Only leave bird food in bird food dispensers
- Protecting small pets like rabbits and guinea pigs in sturdy hutches
- Tidying up overgrown gardens
- Repairing damaged air bricks
- Reporting any cases of nuisance foxes to The Fox Project who might capture and relocate the fox.

In the last year we have not had any formal complaints raised through the pest control unit with regards to attacks on wildlife by urban foxes.

It would be impossible to make our parks and other wildlife areas fox proof as they are excellent climbers and able to dig underground and so would overcome any form of physical barrier.

We will place an article in the council's publication, Southwark Life, to advise people on deterring foxes and the dangers of feeding them.

In the past year we have been contacted 20 times to deal with foxes. These requests for assistance have been passed onto The Fox Project as they are experts in this field. They recommend chemical deterrents such as 'scent-off' which makes gardens less attractive to foxes once applied. In extreme cases, they will capture and relocate a fox. This has not happened in the last year.

Completing a fox cull would make no overall difference to the numbers as foxes breed to a level that the environment will sustain. In completing a culling you would not remove all the vixens so over time the population would grow back to the same level. Other foxes from other areas would also spread into the area whilst this was taking place.

The Fox Project deals with injured foxes and the relocation of foxes sometimes if they are causing a particular concern. They also offer methods of deterrent such as chemicals and ultrasonics to prevent foxes fouling on gardens.

28. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL KYRIACOU

Can the cabinet member for finance, resources and community safety provide details of all a) lost and b) stolen items of council property since 1 January 2011, including the value of each?

RESPONSE

This information is not available in the format that Councillor Kyriacou has requested. However, within Tooley Street there have been no recorded incidents of loss or theft of council assets since January 2011.

29. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR JEFF HOOK

How many visits to the council's website have been made in each of the last three years from a) internal council sources and b) external sources? What have been the top 10 most visited pages on the council website this year?

RESPONSE

2010:

- Total visits: 2,574,016
- Internal visits: 116,696 (4.53%)

2011:

- Total visits: 3,483,326
- Internal visits: 200,943 (5.77%)

2012:

- Total visits: 3,990,828
- Internal visits: 186,938 (4.82%)

Top ten pages on the website for 1 - 13 January inclusive (page views):

1. Homepage: 88,606
2. Jobs: 11,168
3. Pay for it: 7,688
4. Libraries: 4,650
5. A-Z: 4,196
6. Contact: 3,948
7. About Southwark Council: 3,739
8. Search for planning applications: 3,307
9. Council tax: 3,175
10. Planning application and appeals - quick search page: 3,073.

Note on figures: Internal visits are those listed as having originated from Southwark Council in our web analytics package. Some internal access such as from libraries is not captured here, as it is not possible to differentiate internal and external use through their network. Figures provided may not include all of the sub-sites present within the southwark.gov.uk domain.

30. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

How much has been spent on supplies for the hot drink vending machines in council premises in each of the last three years? How much has been spent on buying new machines and servicing existing machines in each of the last three years?

RESPONSE

The modernisation of the council's office accommodation, including Tooley Street and the Queens Road complex, have delivered savings in relation to the cessation of multiple agreements for individual vending services in buildings we have vacated. While there will remain individual departmental arrangements for vending services at other buildings, the information for Tooley Street and Queens Road is set out below:

Building	Year	Vending supplies 2009 to 2012 £	Lease costs 2009 to 2012 £	New purchase costs 2009 to 2012 £	Service costs 2009 to 2012 £
160 Tooley Street	2010	53,850	18,297	0	0
	2011	54,753	18,297	0	0
	2012	57,558	18,297	0	0
132 Queens Road	2010	0	0	0	0
	2011	0	0	0	0
	2012	9,123	0	0	0
Totals		175,248	54,891	0	0

For 160 Tooley Street the servicing costs are included in the lease costs.

For 132 Queens Road the lease and servicing costs are included in the per cup cost of the consumables.

The increase in vending supply costs over the three year period is in line with the impact of the Tooley Street maximisation work and the resultant efficiencies achieved in the density of occupation of the building utilising, in some cases, a higher staff to desk ratio.

The increase in the 2012 figure correlates to the impact of accommodating large numbers of revenue and benefit and housing staff over this period. Additionally the increasing use of the building in the evenings and weekends has increased demand on the vending service.

As staff have been moved to Tooley Street various individual vending arrangements have ceased with the requirements brought under the cost effective Tooley Street arrangements with associated economies of scale and reduction in management overhead.

The new facilities management services contract for Tooley Street, commencing on 1 February 2013 incorporates the vending service within the overall contract. This contract is expected to deliver £312,000 per annum savings over current costs.

31. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LINDA MANCHESTER

What are the 50 most frequently visited websites from council computers in each of the last three years, and the number of visits to each?

RESPONSE

The response to years 2010 and 2011 were taken from summary data already extracted.

Serco can restore the activity data in order for us to be able to run extracts for these years but they are currently engaged with the Capita transition. We do expect to have this data restored next week but this would be too late for the council meeting deadline.

The three months missing data does not affect the overall top 50 given the large number of requests over the whole year. These figures exclude any library access as this goes out via the London grid for learning, which is a different connection.

Number of visits	Website
6,444,416	clients1.google.co.uk
4,853,158	mt0.google.com
4,606,660	maps.google.co.uk
3,131,197	mt1.google.com
3,064,424	b.scorecardresearch.com
3,031,696	www.lse.co.uk
2,999,533	www.facebook.com
2,732,582	prod1.rest-notify.msg.yahoo.com
2,636,146	ad.uk.doubleclick.net
2,334,700	ping.chartbeat.net
2,139,881	www.bbc.co.uk
2,116,907	ad.doubleclick.net
2,080,226	www.amazon.co.uk
1,881,042	t0.gstatic.com
1,853,911	t2.gstatic.com
1,852,699	t1.gstatic.com
1,849,108	t3.gstatic.com
1,809,299	www.bing.com
1,721,550	ad.yieldmanager.com
1,664,179	www.live.com
1,653,113	www.google.com

Number of visits	Website
1,568,263	cdnedge.bbc.co.uk
1,556,210	cbk1.google.com
1,392,520	cbk0.google.com
1,388,423	rad.msn.com
1,296,238	sa.bbc.co.uk
1,252,265	pictures2.autotrader.co.uk
1,240,028	googleads.g.doubleclick.net
1,177,515	oas.guardian.co.uk
1,119,859	a.rad.msn.com
1,065,240	us.bc.yahoo.com
1,036,812	images.littlewoods.com
994,350	db3.api.bing.com
970,979	maps.southwark.gov.uk
937,899	mail.thealbany.org.uk
933,407	cbk3.google.com
918,880	mail.aol.com
890,073	mt1.googleapis.com
884,902	mt0.googleapis.com
872,530	cbk2.google.com
792,141	pixel.quantserve.com
781,995	gg.google.com
773,545	ib.adnxs.com
759,755	ad-emea.doubleclick.net
745,659	platform.twitter.com
736,982	en.wikipedia.org
692,029	maps.google.com
670,408	secure-uk.imrworldwide.com
665,490	iasset.ftphostinguk.com

32. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR MARK GLOVER

If the Liberal Democrat three-year budget proposed in February 2011 had been agreed, would the council have needed to make more or less savings next month?

RESPONSE

The Liberal Democrat budget amendment, proposed in February 2011, for the council's three-year budget sought to make a £8.475 million contribution to the council's reserves in 2013-14.

In addition, the amendment also sought to increase council tax returns by £800,000 for 2013-14 from improved collection rates. Given the coalition government's changes to council tax benefit in the forthcoming year, this is clearly unrealistic.

To bridge this gap, the Liberal Democrats' budget would therefore have required the council to find an additional £9.275 million in the 2013-14 budget, either through service cuts or by increasing council tax by 10.2%.

33. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

What is the view of the cabinet member for finance, resources and community safety regarding the proposed police and fire station closures and cutbacks in the borough?

RESPONSE

The net impact of all the Mayor's proposed cuts to both the police and fire service in Southwark are deeply worrying.

Police

On 9 January 2013 the Mayor's office for policing and crime (MOPAC) put forward the following proposals for Southwark:

- Closure of East Dulwich police station, removing the front counter service
- Closure of Rotherhithe police station, removing the front counter service
- Closure of Camberwell police station
- A 76% reduction in the hours of operation for Southwark police station from 168 hours a week to 40 hours a week
- A 33% reduction in the hours of operation for either Peckham or Walworth station (there is confusion from MOPAC about which)
- A 13% reduction in police numbers since 2010, from 948 officers to 816
- A reduction of all ward-based safer neighbourhood teams to a single named officer.

I will be working with council officers and the new borough commander, John Sutherland, to try to find ways to mitigate the impact of these cuts as much as we can, and the leader and I have already met with MOPAC to discuss where the police might share premises with the council if this is the only way to maintain front counter services that will otherwise be removed. Nevertheless, the scale of the reduction in hours in the borough is concerning.

In addition, I am concerned that the impact of closures of a number of stations in neighbouring boroughs - Gypsy Hill, Sydenham, South Norwood and Brockley - will create a black-hole of police provision around the south of the borough.

I have made very clear to the Mayor's deputy for policing, Stephen Greenhalgh, that the proposed police numbers for the borough are unacceptable, as is the whittling away of safer neighbourhood teams. I will continue to lobby the Mayor and his office for policing on this matter.

Fire stations

On Friday 11 January 2013 revised proposals regarding London's fire stations were published by Ron Dobson, the commissioner for the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

The proposals include the closure of Southwark fire station, along with 11 other stations. 11 stations marked for closure are in Inner London. The proposal to close Southwark seems to ignore the rapid increase in the numbers of people that

come to the northwest of our borough every day to work, which will increase further as developments such as The Shard opening. I am therefore extremely concerned that the impact of this closure has not been fully thought through.

There has been one improvement on the initial plans in that the commissioner has backed away from his initial proposal to close Peckham fire station, the only station in the south or centre of the borough. However, the plans still reduce the number of appliances based there from two to one, and the nearby New Cross fire station is still being earmarked for closure. This gives me great concern about capacity in the south and centre of the borough, particularly in the wake of the horrific fires at Lakanal and Sumner Road.

34. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

How do current violent crime statistics in the borough compare to those before Labour took control and introduced its violent crime strategy?

RESPONSE

I am pleased that there are great signs of progress in reducing violent crime in the borough since 2010. The violent crime strategy which was reviewed in November of last year shows that key progress has been made across all five violent crime priority areas.

Violent crime statistics

- Southwark has seen significant reductions in wounding and assault with injury (24%), assault without injury (31%) and domestic abuse (27%) over the last six years.
- 25% reduction in recorded offences of violence against the person over the last six years - 2,200 fewer crimes.

The following statistics are for the financial year to date (April to December 2012) compared to the same period in 2009:

- Violent crime (serious wounding/grievous bodily harm, assault with injury, harassment and common assault) has reduced by 26%, representing 1,559 fewer crimes (from 6,099 to 4,540 offences).
- Overall violence reduced by 16% (from 8,600 to 7,243) when comparing the two periods.
- Gun crime reduced from 175 offences between April and December 2009 to 113 offences between April and December 2012. This equates to a 35% reduction (62 fewer offences).
- Knife crime with injury decreased by 30% in the same period, from 254 to 179 offences.

- Most serious violence reduced by 42% when comparing April to December 2012 with the same period in 2009. This equates to 245 fewer offences (from 582 to 337).
- Domestic offences reduced from 1972 offences in 2009 to 1526 in 2012, a reduction of 22.6 % (446 offences).

The strategy has put into place a number of initiatives that have helped achieve this reduction. These include the work of the Southwark anti-violence unit helping former gang members out of a life of crime, for example through helping them into full time employment; one to one mentoring, training and work placements; prioritising early intervention with young people at risk of making violent lifestyle choices and developing a single multi-agency approach to enforcement and support.

35. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE, SPORT AND OLYMPIC LEGACY FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

Can the cabinet member provide an update on plans for moving Grove Vale library? Will the council commit to an end date for this process?

RESPONSE

The council completed a formal agreement with the developer last year. That agreement requires the developer to hand a library, as specified in the agreement, to the council by 31 March 2014. Officers have approached the developer asking that he confirm his commitment to this date and provide details of his design team so that detailed discussions can commence. A response is awaited.

36. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

What is the target time for dealing with Blue Badge renewals in each of the last three years? What is the current waiting time for Blue Badge renewals? What was the estimated waiting time for customers applying to renew a Blue Badge in each of the past six months?

RESPONSE

The target time for dealing with Blue Badge renewals in each of the last three years is to provide the new badge prior to the old badge expiring.

The current waiting time for renewals is five days, where we have received all of the evidence required. This means that the customer will receive their Blue Badge prior to the previous one expiring.

For customers applying to renew a Blue Badge, in each of the past six months the target was to renew the badge prior to the expiry of the previous one. There were some delays in renewing Blue Badges in the last three months of the year. This was because two members of staff left the Blue Badge team and there was a gap until replacement staff could start. Currently renewals are being processed within five working days.

37. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

How many adults in receipt of social care services will be transferred to personal budgets? How many of these transfers have been completed to date (broken down by month)? How many people have indicated a wish to keep council managed personal budgets?

RESPONSE

The council plan contains the target that 90% of eligible users will be on personal budgets by the end of 2012-13 and 100% during 2013-14. This is in line with the national target.

We estimate that this will be around 3,300 users by the year end and 3,700 next year, although these numbers are subject to any demographic changes.

Latest data shows that 3,057 people have transferred to a personal budget. The recent monthly breakdown this year has been:

- June: 2,571
- July: 2,583
- August: 2,696
- September: 2,725
- October: 2,975
- November: 3,057

The November total represents approximately 82% of eligible users. We are on track to deliver our council plan target and the national target.

Of the November total, 1,711 (56%) have requested council managed personal budgets, this represents top quartile performance nationally.

38. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS

Which roads in Southwark have had their yellow lines replaced with restricted parking zones? How many fines have been issued in Clink Street, Winchester Square and Cathedral Street before and since it was designated as a restricted parking zone rather than a yellow line area?

RESPONSE

The roads within restricted zones in Southwark where yellow lines have been removed are Bank End (part), Stoney Street (part), Clink Street, Winchester Square, Iliffe Street (part) and Cathedral Street (part).

The number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued in streets within the restricted parking zone are:

Location	Contravention	PCNs issued in last ¼ before restricted zone implemented (Sep-Dec '11)	PCNs issued in last ¼ 2012 (Sep – Dec 2012)
Clink Street	01 - Parked in a restricted street	7	15
	26 - Double parked	0	1
	40 - Parked in a disabled bay without displaying a badge	0	12
	62 - Parked on the footway	0	2
Winchester Square		0	0
Cathedral Street	01 - Parked in a restricted street	10	43
	25 - Parked in a loading bay	0	6
	62 - Parked on the footway	3	8

39. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Given that the borough has in the past couple of years been suffering an unprecedented amount of road works carried out by a variety of organisations and contractors, would the cabinet member agree there is an issue with many of our streets looking more like patchwork quilts than well surfaced roads? Is he satisfied with the standards of reinstatement after works? What powers does the council have in respect of poor reinstatement, in conjunction with Transport for London when appropriate?

RESPONSE

Although there are many large and high profile works being delivered across the borough, such as the Shard, Aylesbury regeneration and London Bridge Station redevelopment, the number of road works in the borough has fallen over the last three years by nearly 10,000 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number of works per year:

	Authority Permit Applications	Utility Permit Applications	Total Permit Applications
2010	12,118	15,577	27,695
2011	11,769	13,106	24,875
2012	6,723	11,179	17,902

The embargo on road works during the Olympic period has meant that there has been a subsequent rush to complete works, thus the level of work in the last quarter has been high, but it is very unlikely the number of road works will be higher than in previous years.

In 2010 the council reviewed the delivery of street works and implemented an improvement programme which included increasing the level of resources deployed on inspection, implementing new powers, such as fixed penalty notices and in 2011 the implementation of the London permit scheme. This scheme, which requires utility companies to pay for each road works according to the locations and type of work has been one of the key factors in reducing the number of works being carried out, as utility companies are incentivised to improve coordination and planning of their works.

In addition to issuing permits for work the network management team has also issued 77 fines for working without a permit and completed eight prosecutions. This has significantly reduced the number of companies who work without the correct council permit.

The monitoring of works quality is also carried out by the network inspectors. They monitor utility companies works for a wide range of issues including:

- Safety of works sites whilst in progress
- Quality of repairs following completion
- Quality of repairs before the end of guarantee period
- Completion of works on the agreed date to prevent works overrunning
- Inspections of reported failure of manhole covers and other apparatus.

For both safety inspections and reinstatement inspections, failure to meet the required standards results in a defect charge being issued and follow-up inspections scheduled. These inspections continue until such time as the defect is rectified.

The number of inspections has increased by 45% in the past three years (see Table 2), despite the fact that the total number of works has actually reduced. As a result the performance of the utility companies has significantly improved across all monitoring types. The high level of failures on repair quality in 2011 is a result of the delay caused by monitoring of works that had been completed throughout the previous two years.

Newer repairs are consistently meeting the improved standard. Although 31% failure may seem high, the standards set out by the Department for Transport are extremely difficult to achieve and most authorities apply some leniency to the application of defects. In Southwark we believe that the standards set in the code of practice should be achieved and any works failing to do so are issued with

defect notices. The standards set out in the code have been achieved by some companies, with British Telecom bringing their defect failure rate below 10%. Unfortunately each time utility companies change their contractor the levels of defective reinstatements increases, until the new company become familiar with the standards being applied.

Table 2: Inspections of works:

	2010	2011	2012
Safety and reinstatement inspections completed	7,473	13,620	10,867
Safety and reinstatement inspection failures	2,518	3,068	2,657
% of safety and reinspection failures	33%	22%	24%
Reinstatement inspections total	3,479	3,245	5,046
Reinstatement inspection failures	1,615	2,056	1,576
Fail %	46%	63%	31%

These tables reflect work being carried out on roads for which Southwark is the highway authority. The 'red routes' or Transport for London road network, are not monitored by Southwark inspectors and the management of both coordination and quality monitoring for utility companies works is the responsibility of Transport for London. Southwark inspectors report any defects or safety issues through to them for action and any public reports are fed through the Southwark traffic manager to ensure that action is taken where appropriate.

40. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING FROM COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY THORNTON

How many parking fines were issued in each of the last three financial years? How many of these fines were appealed? How many of these appeals were successful?

RESPONSE

The table below is taken from the annual reported figures at the end of quarter 1 of the financial years noted and the figures are available in the annual transport report, which is published on the council's website:

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2873/annual_monitoring_prospectus

	Financial Year 2009/10		Financial Year 2010/11		Financial Year 2011/12	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total PCNs	121,724		100,635		98,747	
Number of PCNs which have had an informal or formal representation made	29,782	24.5%	26,416	26.2%	29,170	29.5%
Number of PCNs which have been cancelled as a result of informal or formal representation made	12,241	10.1%	12,357	12.3%	10,633	10.8%
Number of PCNs appealed to the parking adjudicator	1,727	1.4%	1,425	1.4%	1,743	1.8%
Number of PCNs cancelled as a result of parking adjudicator appeal	909	0.7%	290	0.3%	531	0.5%

41. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

What is the average waiting time for households on each of the of the council's housing waiting list bands 1-4? Which waiting list band would a young person on probation be most likely to be included in? What is the average waiting time for young people on probation?

RESPONSE

Average waiting times in months, are shown in the table below.

	Bedsit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Band 1	1	8 - 15	7 - 16	5 - 15	5 - 16
Band 2	2	2 - 7	2 - 10	5 - 22	7 - 27
Band 3	15	21 - 25	33 - 39	39 - 54	38 - 61

With regard to Band 4 it should be noted that, in the course of a year, many thousand bids are placed in Band 4. However there are few such applicants, if any

that reach near the top of a shortlist for a property (and only then for one bedroom, after five or more years). It is not possible to give any representative statistics.

No priority is given to a young person on the basis that they are on probation alone. All applications for housing are assessed individually and different factors are taken into consideration in order to reach a decision on priority. Such factors would include homelessness, medical need, re-settlement support, etc.