

**SOUTHWARK COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**(ORDINARY MEETING)**

**WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 2013**

**URGENT QUESTION**

**1. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI**

After a number of stories in local press in the past week highlighting the absolute chaos in the housing department, what is the leader doing to get a grip on the situation?

**RESPONSE**

I do not recognise Councillor Al Samerai's description of our housing department. In 2010 we inherited a housing service which was in chaos, repairs going undone, false recording of customer satisfaction and a gaping black hole in the housing budget. Since that time we have been turning around Southwark's housing. For the first time in a decade we recreated a dedicated housing department and are properly investing in the homes of people in this borough.

In the last year alone we have taken back 310 properties from illegal occupancy, our best ever and one of the best in the country. We are bringing the call centre in-house from the beginning of June so that we can ensure that we have control over the customer service that our tenants receive. Our warm, dry and safe programme is moving forward and government have brought forward future years' allocations of backlog funding in recognition of our ability to deliver. We are judging our repairs based solely on what residents say to us, and this is showing our best customer satisfaction rates since 2010.

With the volume of housing we have in the borough there will be times when we get it wrong or when people don't get the level of service that they deserve. However, with this administration we hold our hands up when we get it wrong and then put it right. This is in stark contrast to the previous administration who would brush problems under the carpet and tell us that everything was fine. Rather than scrabbling around for bad news about the borough and talking down our borough, its residents and the hard working staff of the council, the Liberal Democrats should be welcoming the fact that there is a Labour administration with the competence to sort out the mess that they created in the first place.